HINDUISM and the CLASH of CIVILIZATIONS

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Dr. David Frawley

Foreword

By Aidan Rankin, Ph.D.

I first became aware of David Frawley's work earlier this year when I was at the University bookshop in Bloomsbury, near to my London home. It used to be called Dillon's and owned by a long-established and worthy firm. Now it is Waterstone's, a thrusting 'success story' of modern entrepreneurship. No longer a traditionally British bookshop, staffed by friendly amateurs, Waterstone's has all the characteristics of a giant American emporium: glossy, squeaky-clean and staffed by indifferent, overworked students. Like its American counterparts, it is replete with self-help guides for stressed male executives and bitter, miserable career women, both products of a disturbed society. In the basement, a bar serves caffe latte, chocolate muffins and a bewildering variety of fruit juice. Waterstone's, in other words, is a microcosm of the global monoculture, that spiritual and economic malaise which Frawley so incisively explores. Yet beneath all the gloss, there persist many of the qualities of a fine English bookshop, where rich gems of scholarship of scholarship and wisdom come to unexpected light, just as rich traditions of spiritual insight still withstand the modern Fetich of the market.

Preface

Hinduism and the Clash of Civilizations continues the line of thought introduced in my earlier books. Arise Arjuna: Hinduism and the Modern World (1995) articulated the need for Hindus to stand up and project their tradition in order to face the current cultural and religious challenges assaulting them on every side. My subsequent book, Awaken Bharata: A Call for India's Rebirth (1998), emphasized the need for a new intelligentsia, an 'intellectual kshatriya' or intellectual warrior class to handle these challenges in a systematic way.

Over time it became clear that such an intellectual movement requires a school of thought, a world-view as its proper foundation. Naturally, an intellectual kshatriya should be trained in a Vedic or dharmic school of thought. Therefore, the present volume arose to articulate the greater Hindu world view—the perspective of the Hindu mind on the current civilizational challenge, which is not only a cultural assault on India but a churning within all cultures throughout the world. Today as a species we stand at a critical juncture, before either a new age of global harmony and world spirituality or a possible global

catastrophe from a voracious materialistic civilization out of harmony with nature.

The wisdom of the Hindu tradition, rooted in universal consciousness, can be a great aid in helping us move in the right direction, but it is seldom brought into the picture even in India. Hinduism is now a global force as the third largest religion in the world, the largest non-biblical belief, and the largest of the pagan, native or indigenous religions. Therefore, a Hindu voice not only on spiritual but also on cultural issues is necessary to provide a balanced view on the global situation today.

Hindu or Indic ideas are now present in most countries in the world today, generally in a dynamic way through Yoga, Vedanta or Vedic sciences like Ayurveda. However, there is little recognition of the overall civilizational perspective behind them. Most of the focus is on a spiritual side of these traditions and the broader civilizational concerns are ignored. While Christian, Islamic and western secular points of view are readily available on most issues, the Hindu view is seldom recognized and does not have corresponding spokespersons or information outlets in the world forum. Hence the need of the present volume to encourage the projection of such a Hindu perspective.

The current clash of civilizations is not merely a commercial or religious encounter. It is an encounter between the schools of thought, the way of thinking

that each civilization represents. Each civilization has its own language, logic and history of ideas that shape and mold its perceptions and actions. When civilizations clash it is first at this level of ideas and beliefs. In the present world context, the Hindu or Indian (Bharatiya) idea of civilization and culture is overlooked. If Hindus enter into debate, it is in the context of the western school of thought, which is not sympathetic to or even aware of the logic of Hindu ideas or how the Hindu mind works. Like players in a game that has rules they don't understand, the Hindu cause seldom comes out well.

Therefore, Hinduism must project its entire dharmic view, its unique vision of the universe, God and humanity, rather than simply respond to side issues framed by the western mind. It must articulate its own critique of civilization, including that of western civilization, which modern Hindu thinkers like Aurobindo or Gandhi so eloquently expressed. There is also an older, comprehensive and well-articulated Indian school of thought through the Vedas, Sutras, Puranas, Tantras and Shastras and a related literature on consciousness and dharma through Buddhist and Jain traditions as well. But these are often out of date and don't consider the changed circumstances of the world today. Hence my emphasis on the need for a 'New Indic School of Thought', specifically on the need

for new 'Vedic schools', developing and articulating the older dharmic traditions of India to meet the new circumstances today.

A new Western dharmic school of thought is also important, taking the insights of the Indic school and applying them in the western context. Ultimately, a new global dharmic school of thought is the goal. Hopefully, the new Indic School of Thought can provide a model and a starting point for it.

While Hinduism and the Clash of Civilizations is a sequel my earlier books, it brings in new themes that neither Awaken Bharata or Arise Arjuna addressed. It has a more futuristic vision and a constructive as well as critical side, outlining a Hindu vision for the entire world. It not only seeks to remove obstacles but also sets forth ideas and models for a new creation—a new age of consciousness on Earth initiated by a revival of Vedic wisdom and culture.

Naturally, I was always asked how I, as someone born in the West, was able to take up this cause or write such books. For this reason, I wrote How I Became a Hindu: My Discovery of Vedic Dharma (2000). That recent book is also relevant to the current title. Hinduism and Clash of Civilizations also supplements my books on ancient India like Gods, Sages and Kings, the Myth of the Aryan

Invasion, Vedic Aryans and the Origins of Civilization (with N.S. Rajaram), and the recent the Rigveda and the History of India. However, the present volume focuses on the background philosophical and cultural issues behind the historical concerns examined in detail in these other works.

Besides history, the book examines Vedic Science, including its relationship with modern science, which I have not addressed significantly in previous titles. It touches the subject Vedanta, which was explored in my book Vedantic Meditation: Lighting the Flame of Awareness. Hinduism and the Clash of Civilizations, therefore, has a broad scope and looks to the future as well as to the past, to spiritual as well as cultural issues.
The book is divided into three sections. The first surveys the challenges of India and Hinduism today and its scope for the future. The second examines the clash between western intellectual culture and the spiritual and intellectual culture of India. It highlights why an independent Indic School of Thought is required, not just an Indic perspective in the current world dominant western school.

The third section suggests principles and main lines for a new Indic/Vedic school of thought. I have separately discussed in Vedanta, Yoga, Ayurveda and Vedic astrology in specific books on these topics. The purpose

of their discussion here is relative to their place in a new school of thought, not to delineate their approaches in detail.

Some chapters have appeared as articles in various publications in India like the Times of India, Vedanta Kesari, the Advent, the Organizer, Naimisha Journal etc. I have rewritten these to fit in with the flow of the book and avoid unnecessary repetition. I would like to thank various individuals who have stimulated my thought in the book including Subhash Kak, N.S. Rajaram, Aidan Rankin, Michel Boutet, Ram Swarup, Swami Dayananda, J.C. Kapur, and many young Hindus, both individually and in different groups and organizations.

Jai Durga!
Dr. David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)
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Part I

India, Hinduism and the New Century

Part I.1

The Goddess Durga, Mother India
as the World Mother

India as a Sacred and Spiritual Land

Since ancient Vedic times, India has been regarded by its people as a sacred land, the very land of the Goddess or Divine Mother. The subcontinent geographically is shaped like a woman with Kashmir as her head and Sri Lanka at her feet. The region holds the mighty Himalayas, the world's highest mountains, in the north, from which flow what is perhaps of the largest and most fertile group of great rivers in the world. India is the image of Mother Nature at her grandest from the mountains to the sea.

India has defined itself historically not in terms of conquests but in terms of spiritual teachings as a land of Yoga and meditation, which themes pervade its great national epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana. It has produced the world's greatest abundance of religious and spiritual paths; form and formless, personal and impersonal, theistic and nontheistic. India has developed its civilization not out of mere human invention or according to any special historical revelation, but from the concept of dharma, a recognition of cosmic law as the prime factor in life.

India has remained a land of both nature and the spirit, a land of the Gods and the yogis, not simply a place of human habitation or a ground for worldly progress.

In the Rigveda, the oldest teaching of the region, India is already lauded the land of the great Goddess Sarasvati, who represents Divine knowledge, power and beauty. Sarasvati was the name of the great river in North India, which flowed from beyond the Ambala hills to the Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat, on which Vedic civilization first emerged after the end of the last Ice Age. Sarasvati, however, is not simply the outer river but represents the inner stream of wisdom and inspiration, what was later called the Sushumna or central channel of the subtle body. After the Sarasvati River dried up in a series of geological and climate changes during the third millennium BCE, the civilization of India shifted its center east to the more certain waters of the Ganga, but it never lost contact with its Vedic roots.

In classical India, the Goddess Durga, the martial from of Shiva's consort, came to symbolize the country, perhaps owing to the need to defend the land from the many outside invaders. It was the Goddess Durga who, in a vision of his, gave the great Hindu King Shivaji his sword to resist the oppression of the Moguls under Aurangzeb and restore Hindu rule in the country in the seventeenth century. Durga is the protective form of the Mother Goddess. She saves her children from

danger, slaying all the demons (negative forces) outwardly and inwardly that might assail the body and soul. Even today, Hindus worship Mother India in the form of the Goddess Durga.

Durga is dressed in red, rides a lion and has a majestic form. She is royal power of the Gods that should be the true ruling power in the world. She represents the defense of Dharma, not an aggressive force of worldly expansion. This, particularly during the current information age, is as much an intellectual and spiritual defense as a military one. For those who wish to understand India and its characteristic civilization, they should examine the image of the Goddess Durga. Why has Durga, the image of feminine and maternal power, come to symbolize India? Because India is the land of Shakti, the Divine evolutionary and transformative force, and embodies higher feminine qualities of patience, tolerance and synthesis. It is because India is 'karma bhumi', the land of spiritual work for the soul, which is also the land of the spiritual battle, Kurukshetra, where humanity's spiritual aspiration is both developed and tested.

Yet Mother India, 'Bharat Mata' in Sanskrit, has many names. She is Bharata Bharati, the solar voice (Bharati) that carries the Divine fire. She is Bharata Bhavani, Mother India as the source of life, in which form the great modern rishi, Sri Aurobindo, lauded her. She is Sita, the Goddess of fertile rivers and fields, humble

before the Divine solar light of Rama. She is Parvati, the daughter of the Himalayas, wedded to Shiva, the transcendent. She is Lakshmi, the beauty and fertility that is wedded to Vishnu, the Divine force that sustains life. To understand India, we must first recognize the Goddess that is her personification in different forms.

India as the World Mother

India is like Mother Earth, reflecting her in a tropical abundance and carrying her secret will for the evolution of consciousness. India is like the Divine Mother incarnate holding the world Shakti in order to uplift humanity. She is like the caring cow that the culture has always afforded the highest reverence, providing nourishment for all.

India, in many respects, is the mother of humanity and the mother of civilization, particularly for the spiritual and yogic life. The great dharmic traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism arose through the power of this land, its sages, culture and peoples. These sages have left their imprint on the country by the power of their tapas, their yogic force which one can still feel in the many temples and tirthas of the region, giving the region a palpable spiritual presence.

India has best preserved the type of spiritual civilization that once dominated the ancient world from Egypt to China, Indochina, Peru and Mexico. It continues the

ancient traditions of temple worship and carries on the old solar religion of enlightenment and self-realization, linking us to the ancient spiritual humanity from which we digressed. It is not in the deserts of the Middle East, with their few or meager rivers that could not sustain significant populations, where civilization arose but in India, the world's most fertile subcontinent.

The greater Himalayan mountains, which ring the plateau of Tibet, mark the crown chakra of the globe. Not surprisingly, the most lofty philosophies and meditation traditions have come from this region. While India has taken the greater portion of the Himalayan rivers, others flow to Indochina, China and Central Asia carrying the influence of these great mountains and their sages in different directions.

The Divine Mother is the source all evolutionary transformations, of all life and creation itself. It is not we human beings who determine or guide history, progress or evolution. It is not our scientists, politicians, economists or intellectuals who consciously create our destiny as a species or as a planet. We are mere pawns in the hands of forces we that we do not even see. India with its yogic culture holds the key to these transformations, if we would but recognize and honor her cultural potential for all humanity and all time.

The Present Crisis

There are not only forces that take the evolution of consciousness forward into the higher light of consciousness, but also those that take it backwards into the dark night of materialism and ignorance. Consciousness, moreover, does not develop in a linear but in a spiral fashion; sometimes it descends in order to ascend more surely at a later time.

India today is like the Divine Mother defiled and degraded, both by the inertia of her own people and by foreign enemies who cannot appreciate her spiritual beauty. The land of the country is ecologically devastated and both the common people and the intellectual elite are unaware of their great heritage and don't know how to use it.

India over time became rigid in its customs, dominated by authority and ritual. Creative thinking and original inquiry gave way to an almost unconscious repetition of the old, a servile adulation of past achievements, instead of new thinking based upon the insights of earlier sages. This made the country prey to foreign attack and vulnerable to foreign rule. The deep devotion of the country became blind. This resulted in a condition in which the loyalty of the masses could as easily be given to a Queen Victoria or to a Babar, to any authoritarian ruler, as to a truly great Raja or king. A force of tamas or inertia settled over the land that

prevents the people of the region from tapping the great reserve of spiritual power in which they live, removing them from the lionhearted sense of the Atman or higher Self that is the true force of Durga.

In this respect of spirituality, the civilization of India remains central to that of the rest of the world, in which our human spiritual potential is even yet more obscure. India is the land where the Gods can descend and where the great yogis can take birth. A resurgent India, therefore, is crucial for the regeneration of the planet. Yet India is also a land where the anti-Gods (Asuras) can rule and where hostile forces do not want a national awakening. The powers of the ignorance would just as well keep the country down for another thousand years if they can.

Fortunately, Durga, the Divine Shakti is coming forth again today. She is already stirring and beginning a new manifestation. She is preparing the decisive moment for her revelatory action. We must make ourselves into her vessels in order to aid in her transformations. While India may be the focus of her awakening, her action is beginning all over the world. She is the awakened planet that must soon arise to defend itself from the encroachment of an arrogant humanity that has fallen from grace. Meanwhile, a new humanity is also taking shape under her benefic glance. Let us be receptive to her guidance and take up her energy!

Part I.2

India and the Coming Century

Indian Civilization in the Modern World

Indian or Bharatiya civilization is, if not the oldest, at least the most continuous in the world. While ancient Egypt, Greece and Persia fell and lost their cultures to outside influences thousands of years ago, India uniquely continued its venerable ancient traditions throughout the centuries, even under long periods of foreign rule. Those who look upon India as a defeated land, therefore, are wrong. While India failed to win all the battles, no other country won so many and refused to give in, even when defeated. Though battered by time, Indian or Bharatiya civilization has better survived the onslaughts of time than any other culture. It has done so not through military force or missionary zeal—like the fierce opponents it has had to resist—but through the dedication of its people to the spiritual practices set forth in the region during ancient times. India is the perennial civilization of the planet, present and conscious in every age.

In India today one can still observe the same type of temple worship and fire offerings, with beautiful images and profound rituals, that once existed throughout the ancient world over two thousand years

ago. One can discover the entire heritage and history of the human race, particularly on a spiritual level, as a living practice from the aboriginal worship of stones to the highest philosophy of monism and Self-realization. The great traditions of Yoga and Vedanta, as well as related health disciplines of Ayurveda and art forms of Indian music and dance continue today as in the hoary past. The stories of Rama and Krishna, who lived long before Buddha or Christ, still inspire the common people and provide examples of how to live today with joy and integrity.

Yet India is not only a land of the past but also of the future. The vision of a quantum universe like that of modern science, where space and time a relative and the universe is linked by wormholes, was foreseen by the great rishis and yogis of the Himalayas long ago. The idea of transcending time and space to a universal consciousness is the central theme of Vedantic philosophy going back to the Vedas and Upanishads at the dawn of Indian civilization. Yogic texts like the Yoga Vasishta rival the latest science fiction books, portraying a higher consciousness in which we can cross time and space in an instant or understand telepathically the minds and hearts of others. The Hindu Puranas abound with stories of beings from other worlds, occult powers and many humanities through different cycles of civilization of which our present civilization is only one brief episode. The idea of

many solar systems, many universes (Brahmandas) and many cycles of cosmic creation and destruction lasting billions and billions of years was arrived at by the Indian mind before European civilization even existed. Such a vast vision remains the hallmark of Indic thought that has a cosmic, not anthropocentric view, starting and ending with the universe, not just with our limited human species.

India's greatest and most popular export to the modern world is undoubtedly the guru, the idea of an enlightened master as a living reality, not just a special prophet or Son of God who lived long ago. This has added a new dimension to the spiritual life in the West, which is moving from the pursuit of salvation to the quest for Self-realization as its determinative factor based upon an Indian influence. Great Hindu gurus like Ramana Maharshi or Paramahansa Yogananda are lauded by many in the West as being great as Jesus or St. Francis. Such teachers have changed the spiritual landscape of the West permanently and radically.

Yet the Indian genius is not simply limited to spiritual matters. Its scientific and mathematical skills have made Indians successful in the computer and software industry, which promises to be the new oil of the coming century. Indians have also done well in engineering and in medicine, reflecting their inborn intelligence and practical skills. In addition, India retains a rich culture in many domains of life from food and

textiles to music and dance that is having an impact all over the world. Indian culture can compete well in any fair marketplace, once the people of the country are set free of the oppressive bureaucracy that limits their development. It is the only culture in the world that maintains its roots in a yogic vision of totality.

India and the Future

Clearly, the coming global technological age, which is based on knowledge and information and has a new spiritual and planetary orientation, is friendlier to India that has always emphasized knowledge or vidya as the basis of culture. This is quite different than the colonial and industrial era of past decades that was based on heavy equipment and military might and was both anti-India and anti-spiritual in nature. Hindus should recognize the opportunities of the new era. They should give up the isolated ghetto mentality developed under foreign rule, which made them mistrust foreigners, and learn once more to share and expand their culture with joy and confidence. The Hindu tradition is Sanatana Dharma (the Eternal Dharma) and has a global relevance that the time is ripe to express and renew.

The new information age is bringing a new global appreciation of Indian culture and the inevitability of India as a major world power for the coming century. A diverse subcontinent with a variety of peoples and traditions held together by a common spiritual vision is

a great strength for the future that no other country can match. While the country of India still has a negative image in the world mind today for poverty and overpopulation, being an Indian is a positive appellation in the work field in the West where Indian scientists and software technicians are highly regarded. This gap between the reputation of India and that of Indians is now beginning to be bridged. Soon India as a country will be honored as much as its spiritual traditions or its people overseas, providing of course Indians embrace their own deeper tradition and cease to apologetically imitate inferior cultures.

Indic civilization is based upon the idea of the Atman or the Self as the highest truth, our inmost consciousness and true nature beyond God, scriptures and saviors. Its aim is to set the individual free from all mental and material limitations, even those of religion. Nor does it see mere human scientific innovation as the way to real and lasting progress for humanity. It looks within to find the universe, not through an external lens but through our own power of concentration, so that we are no longer dependent upon the outside world for our well-being.

The Self or conscious being exists in all nature, in plants and animals, the earth and the stars. In the Vedic view, the cosmic person (Purusha) exists in the Sun, Moon, fire and lightning, as the inner consciousness inherent in these outer forms of light. We must honor this Self

everywhere to find peace and make our right place in the conscious universe. Mother India has preserved the knowledge and culture based upon the Atman and its unfoldment. Now is the time to revitalize and globalize this for the benefit of all, starting with India itself, which has not yet embraced its real power or mission as a nation.

Part I.3

The Re-emergence of the Hindu Mind

The Perennial Hindu Mind

The Hindu mind[1] represents humanity's oldest and most continuous stream of conscious intelligence on the planet. Hindu sages, seers, saints, yogis and jnanis have maintained an unbroken current of awareness linking humanity with the Divine since the dawn of history, and as carried over from earlier cycles of civilization in previous humanities unknown to our present spiritually limited culture. The Hindu mind sustains a connection with the cosmic mind and the blueprint of creation and evolution in this physical world, as well as our connection to worlds more subtle and spiritual. The Hindu mind has a vision of eternity and infinity. It is aware of the vast cycles of creation and destruction that govern the many universes and innumerable creatures within them.

The Hindu mind is not a name and form based intellect, just as the Hindu tradition is not a name and form

[1] I must thank Bansi Pandit for making this idea popular in his recent book The Hindu Mind. Koenraad Elst's recent Decolonizing the Hindu Mind developed the idea further.

based tradition. It is not attached to a particular name that can be used like a title or slogan to promote an exclusive or simplistic belief. One can call the Hindu mind the 'yogic mind', 'Vedic mind', 'Dharmic mind', 'Atmic mind', or other terms, which indicate some aspect of it. The term 'Hindu', possessing limited ethnic connotations in the minds of many, may not be the best, but it is the one most used today and remains most convenient for purposes of communication. More accurately, the Hindu mind is the mind of Sanatana Dharma (Sanatana Dharma Buddhi), the universal or eternal Dharma that transcends person, history, institution or social identity.

The Hindu mind does not seek to impose itself upon people from the outside through force or persuasion. It is not interested in a mere change of names, labels, titles or beliefs. It looks to restoring our linkage with the higher consciousness behind the world, whatever name or form we might want to approach it through. The Hindu mind's wish is that we reconnect with our true Self and Being that transcends all outer appearances and religious divisions—and that we honor all the various expressions that Self takes, which can never be reduced to one religion, philosophy, language or culture.

The Hindu mind is not simply a religious mind, though it contains what is probably the world's most extensive devotional tradition for worshipping God in all forms

whether male or female, personal or impersonal. The Hindu mind covers all aspects of human life and culture, linking us to the cosmic mind and the full range of existence in all worlds, physical, subtle and causal. Hindu texts like Yogic and Vedantic Shastras address the religious issues of God, creation, the soul, liberation and immortality. Yet other texts, like the many Dharma Shastras, deal with the proper social order and how to maintain it. Other texts cover science from astronomy and meteorology (Jyotish Shastras) to medicine (Ayurveda Shastras). Art, music, dance, sculpture and architecture are also discussed in numerous Hindu texts and teachings. The Hindu mind is a comprehensive and universal mind that has examined in depth all aspects of existence, whether classifying the myriad types of mantras and deities, foods and herbs, dance steps or gestures, or stars and universes.

Historical Background

The Hindu mind in ancient times was one of, if not the dominant force, shaping world civilization, particularly the civilization of Asia, which dominated the world until recent centuries. Hindu thinkers were contact with the great thinkers of ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome, Ireland, Persia and China—perhaps also Mexico and Peru. Hindu yogis and sages watched the fall of the monumental cultures of the early ancient world like

Egypt and Sumeria. They saw the arising of the monotheistic cults of Christianity and Islam and how these marginalized, if not destroyed the older occult and spiritual knowledge of their countries.

As the western world lost its ancient spiritual traditions, Hindu sages saw Indic civilization spread east to China, Indochina and Indonesia, with both Buddhist and Hindu forms spreading in various ways and in different intermixtures. Later, they saw a slow encroachment of Islam on the western outposts of Indian civilization in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Sind. Around 1000 AD, they witnessed the eruption of Islamic armies into India, that in the thirteenth century ravaged nearly the entire subcontinent. Many Hindu and Yoga groups and teachers went into hiding, taking refuge in the Himalayas or the mountains of the south. They saw many of their ashrams, temples, libraries and universities destroyed, and many of their teachers killed or imprisoned.

The Hindu mind, under siege during the Islamic invasions, lost its eminence in the world forum during the colonial era. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century great western thinkers like Voltaire and Goethe praised the Hindu tradition and the Brahmin class that sustained it. However, those seeking to convert or conquer India tried to turn the Hindu mind and lofty spirituality and philosophy into mere idolatry, eroticism and superstition. No doubt Hindus contributed to these

distortions, having lost sight of their real traditions, getting enmeshed in mere outer ritualistic practices and customs.

Though subject to much denigration, the Hindu mind quickly reemerged with strength in the late nineteenth century in India through such figures as Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of Ramakrishna, and Swami Dayananda of the Arya Samaj, who issued a call to return to the Vedas. Under Vivekananda the neo-Hindu movement went to the West and spawned the Yoga-Vedanta movement that has become an important aspect of culture all over the world. Since Vivekananda a continual stream of Hindu teachers has traveled throughout the world and impacted western society in a profound way, not trying to impose the Hindu religion on people but reflecting the concern of the Hindu mind for Self-realization and the creation of a global spiritual culture.

In India, the Hindu mind started and shaped the Indian independence movement. The prime figures of this movement in the early twentieth century were, at least in their private lives, staunch Hindus and practitioners of Yoga. These included not only Mahatma Gandhi, but also Tilak, Aurobindo and Subhas Bose, even Savarkar who opposed Gandhi on most political issues. Hindu religious leaders gave their inner support to the movement, whether Chandrashekhar Sarasvati, the

Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram, or the great jnani, Ramana Maharshi.

However, after achieving independence instead of taking control of the country and charting a new course in harmony with its spiritual past, the Hindu mind, perhaps exhausted by the struggle, lost control of the intellectual ethos of India. The Hindu worldview of Vivekananda, Aurobindo or Gandhi was replaced by a leftist-Marxist worldview, guided by Nehru, who was a Fabian socialist with little regard for anything Hindu. To shore up their position, the leftists in India created an alliance of anti-Hindu forces, including even missionaries, which they did not do in any other country. Post-independent India became structured by Marxist economic and social policies, creating a bureaucracy similar to and as rigid as that of the Soviet Union. The textbooks and media of India, guiding by their English and Marxist elite, banished Hindu concerns and made them the main target of their abuse and ridicule. 'Hindu' became a dirty word for them and the idea that there was any Hindu civilization was scorned, just as it was by the previous colonial masters. The result was that independent India was still ruled by a foreign and hostile mindset.

Re-emergence Today

Nevertheless, the Hindu mind, being the native intelligence of the country, could not be suppressed. It continued in India through the religious and spiritual concerns of the common people. In the late twentieth century, it gradually emerged again. New groups are arising today that find great value in the Hindu tradition and look once more to Vivekananda and Aurobindo. They are adding a Hindu voice to the social and political concerns of the country, to uphold the traditions and civilization of the region. They have discovered a pride in being Hindu that is not sectarian or belief-oriented but based on a recognition of a great literature, culture and yogic science. They are reexamining history from a Hindu perspective and exposing the colonial distortion of their Vedic heritage that fails to recognize the spiritual root of Indic civilization. They are realizing that appeasing minorities, a prime leftist policy, is not the way to bring India forward but that what is needed is re-expressing the country's dharmic concerns and practices.

Not surprisingly, outside interests are suspicious of any Hindu awakening in India, though they do not mind the ruder Islamic awakenings in other countries! It is true that some new Hindus groups may be tinged with fanaticism and extremism, but to a slight degree. We should note that when oppressed groups begin to assert themselves, like a person who has long been

beaten down, they can express an anger that is not always appropriate to the current situation. In addition, most Hindu groups have not been media savvy. They are often intellectually unsophisticated or inarticulate in the modern context or in the current global English idiom. Some naively extol everything Hindu, including out of date social customs and regressive beliefs.

Yet more commonly, leftists in India have made the allegation of extremism against Hindu forces that is at best an exaggeration and at worst a complete invention. This anti-Hindu propaganda has been a ploy to discredit the Hindu cause and protect their citadels of power that a Hindu revival would take away from them. The leftists have thrown their typical denigrating slurs against Hinduism as fascist, Nazi or fundamentalist, perhaps hoping that these distortions will arouse negative reactions and keep people from really looking at the Hindu cause.

Yet the Hindu cause is not alone and is discovering new allies. First is the Western Yoga and New Age movement that honors the spiritual and ancient culture of India, chants mantras, honors deities and practices vegetarianism. Many westerners come to India to study with Hindu gurus, visit temples and ashrams and attend religious festivals like the Kumbha Mela. A New Age movement has also arisen in India, bringing in western new age views of healing and spirituality as well as western versions of Indian teachings. This is very

helpful because in India, intellectuals denigrate Hindu traditions as backward, right wing and conservative. To have them supported by progressive and futuristic elements in western society neutralizes these charges.

The second group of new allies is the neopagan movement in the West and the resurgence in native traditions and ethnic religions all over the world. Such groups now recognize Hinduism as an important kin and ally, the main native tradition that has survived the modern world. A new movement to promote religious diversity and pluralism, including protecting native cultures from missionary assault, has arisen often led by Hindu teachers.

Third are allied dharmic traditions in Asia, particularly the Tibetan Buddhists who have taken refuge in India, largely because of the tolerant nature of the Hindu mind, not because the socialist government of the country that was sympathetic to the Chinese. The Dalai Lama himself has supported India’s nuclear testing, India’s defense in the Kargil War in Kashmir, and the criticisms of Christian missionary activity by Hindu gurus. He visited the Kumbha Mela in 2001.

Fourth are new western thinkers in ecology, psychology and spirituality, who are finding an affinity with the Asian traditions of honoring nature and respect for the Earth. They are receptive to native ways of looking at culture and the land, which makes them more receptive to Hindu Dharma.

Fifth are Hindus overseas who now have a significant and often affluent presence in the United States, the Caribbean, the UK, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. They are building temples and schools worldwide, showing a modern image of Hindu culture that is successful in the western world, particularly in cutting edge fields of software, engineering and medicine. The presence of successful Hindus in their West is a great remedy against stereotypes of Hindus as poor, uneducated and superstitious.

As a result of these concurrent factors the Hindu mind is coming forth again. We can now recognize an emergent Hindu view on religion, on spirituality, on history, on ecology, on medicine, on the social order and on science. A comprehensive Hindu view of all aspects of life is slowly gaining articulation. The coming century, with a probable shift of civilization once more to Asia, will witness the continuing expansion of the Hindu mind and its global influence.

The western world will have to face a Hindu critique as well, questioning the materialism and commercialism of the West that is often culturally at a juvenile level. Christian missionaries will face Hindu criticism and debate, questioning their very need to convert, and the basis of their theology that requires only one Son of God for everyone. The Islamic world will encounter a dynamic Hindu mind that cannot accept the rigid Islamic formula of One God, one scripture, a last

prophet, paradise for the believers and hell for the non-believers as an adequate formulation for a true religion. At the same time, the tolerant and synthetic Hindu mind will welcome and absorb into itself genuinely spiritual, mystical and occult knowledge from all traditions, even from the very groups that have traditionally opposed it.

Naturally, there will continue to be a tremendous civilizational bias against the reemergence of the Hindu mind because it threatens the political and culturally hegemony of the other groups that have already divided the world's territory among them. In spite of such opposition and possible deliberate obstruction, the Hindu mind will continue to unfold. It is quite at home in the planetary age, in tune with cosmic intelligence, and capable of tremendous transformation and adaptation. The Hindu mind has the strength and insight of innumerable yogis and seers. Its links go beyond the earth and the physical plane to the very roots of creation in the cosmic mind, to the very Self of all beings.

The world need not fear the Hindu mind. The Hindu mind treats all beings and all cultures as sacred. It works to promote Self-realization on both individual and societal levels. It has no agenda of conversion or conquest. It is not seeking to defame or eliminate any genuine impulse to truth whatever name or form it takes. The Hindu mind is not trying to impose a single

name, savior or institution on the world. It is not rushing to any historical goal or fearing any Armageddon. All time is with it and it honors the great civilizations of the ancient as well as of the modern world. Its purpose is to help us reclaim our true nature and live in harmony with the nature of all. It is not motivated by money, power, and territory or by the need to save souls. One could compare the Hindu mind to the grace of the Divine Mother who is seeking to foster her own children according to the needs of their nature, with a special regard for each and favoritism for none. As Sri Krishna states in the Gita IX.29, "I am the same in all beings. I have no favorite and no enemy. Those who worship me with love, I am in them and they are in me."

Part I.4

Hinduism and the New Millennium

Hinduism through History

The world today is looking to a new millennium, with the year 2000 having just arrived (though will little of the fanfare or catastrophes predicted of it!). As modern culture is dominated by western civilization, which has a Christian basis, it looks to the Christian calendar as defining time for humanity. That most of humanity today and most of history has not been Christian is seldom emphasized.

However, a new millennium is nothing new for Hinduism, which is now in its sixth millennium of the present Kali age, not to speak of its recognition of longer ages or yugas before that. The Hindu tradition has crossed many thousands of years, going back to the very origins of civilization as we know it some ten thousand years ago at the end of the last Ice Age. From the early beginnings of civilization in India on the banks of the now dry Sarasvati River up to the present technological age, Hinduism has remained as a steady flame of spiritual light in the world. It is the most enduring religion and culture in the world, continuing remarkably age after age. Over the course of time Hinduism has seen numerous civilizations come and go.

It witnessed the fall of Egypt, Babylonia and Rome, as well as the arising of Christianity and Islam, and the coming of the modern age. What is the secret behind Hinduism's ability to endure? It has not continued age after age simply because of a conservative culture that has preserved old customs. It has endured because of its ability to adapt to time changes and to reinvent itself in a dynamic way in successive eras.

The Hindu tradition is not based upon any particular historical revelation that would tie it down to a particular era or cause it to look to any end of time or end of the world. It accepts the existence of different ages (yugas) of humanity and different civilizations, of which our current cycle of civilization is only one. Hindu Dharma sees history according to the cycles of nature, with the rising and falling of cultures like the coming and going of plants and animals through the seasons of the year. Hinduism positions itself above time in the eternal, looking to link humanity with what transcends time.

The Hindu tradition is not based upon any specific savior or prophet or historical personality. It recognizes many sages and seers, known and unknown, both inside its tradition and outside of it. It accepts many great teachers of the past but also those of the present and of the future. It has no chosen people but addresses all living beings, not merely humans but plants and animals as well. Nor is it simply an earth

tradition but looks to beings of all worlds, including the denizens of subtle worlds beyond the physical.

Hinduism defines itself as Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal or Universal Dharma. Dharma means universal law, the fundamental principles behind this marvelous universe like the law of karma. Sanatana means perennial, referring to eternal truth that manifests in ever new names and forms. Hinduism is the oldest religion of the world because it is based on the eternal origins of creation. But it is also the newest religion in the world because it adjusts its names and forms to every generation and looks to living teachers, not old books, as its final authority.

Because of this background, Hinduism views the new millennium in a different way than most people today. Christians view the new millennium as either bringing the end of the world along with salvation for the faithful that they have long prayed for, or as marking a new era to spread their religion further in the world through renewed evangelical and missionary efforts. Other people look to a new millennium as defined by the inventions of science and taking us into a new era of technological wonders and space travel.

From the Hindu perspective no religion owns time and no revelation defines history. Each person and each culture has its own time or duration, which should be used for self-discovery and self-realization. Hindu sages look at the new era for humanity arising today through

science and globalism as but the dim beginnings of a greater age of consciousness and spirituality that is as yet only touching the horizon. They don't see this new era defined by the year 2000 but by the events of the past few decades and yet many more decades to come. The industrial revolution gave way to the information revolution but the information revolution must in turn give way to an age of consciousness that is the real goal of human striving. Humanity is still in transition between an era of materialism and one of spirituality and the decisive turn has not yet been made. The coming century is bound to bring ecological and cultural crises that will force us to move in a more conscious direction. This will bring not only great new discoveries and breakthroughs as we advance in knowledge, but also suffering and karmic reckoning for our immature and arrogant way of dealing with our environment.

The Hindu Renaissance and Global Hinduism

Hindu Dharma has already undergone a remarkable renaissance in the modern age. Less than two hundred years ago Hinduism seemed to be on the verge of complete collapse. It was caught in inertia and under siege by the missionary and colonial forces that had been ruling India for centuries. Yet at that extremity it didn’t collapse but renewed itself, going back to its ancient roots to provide for new and expansive growths.

The result was that in the nineteenth century the modern Hindu renaissance began from several angles. Swami Dayananda Sarasvati of the Arya Samaj issued a call to return to the Vedas. Swami Vivekananda brought forth a new awakening of Hinduism to Yoga and Vedanta. Many other such leaders arose throughout the country to follow such a vision.

The Hindu renaissance was not limited to India. Vivekananda spread his message throughout the entire world, which rediscovered Hinduism as the deep philosophy of Vedanta and the profound practice of Yoga.

With this Hinduism began to go global. It became the main tradition pioneering dialogue and synthesis in religion, promoting a recognition that sages throughout the world have always taught the same message of oneness. After the counterculture movements of the nineteen sixties, many other India-based spiritual groups started in the West.

The twentieth century marked a new and independent India in which Hindus were the majority and no longer had to suffer under the rule of a religion seeking to convert them. This led to a building of many new temples throughout the country. Recent decades witnessed a Diaspora of Hindus throughout the globe, particularly as professionals in new technology fields. With the many new immigrants from India in the last two decades, almost every important sect in Hinduism

can be found in the West, with Hindu temples in the main cities of Europe and North America.

Hinduism under Siege

Yet in spite of this renaissance, Hinduism as a specific religion did not truly flourish in the twentieth century. It remained under siege by colonial and missionary forces that remained active even after colonialism by Christian countries had ended. On top of these, a new leftist and communist thinking arose that attacked it further by allying themselves with residual colonial forces and Islam. Many countries of Asia like China and Indochina became communist and under its rule tried to destroy their older religious traditions. While India as a whole did not become communist, several states like Kerala and Bengal did, and the communists gained a favoured position in the media and universities of the country from which their anti-Hindu message became magnified beyond their political power. Indian intellectuals embraced Marxism as their new religion and few remained to articulate a Hindu point of view to the world.

Free India under Nehru opted for a socialist-communist model that perpetuated the British system of education and a leftist way of thinking that was often unabashedly anti-Hindu and sometimes pro-Islamic and pro-Christian. The economic problems of India, which resulted from the same socialist economies that failed all over the world, were blamed on

Hinduism. The social and class problems of the country that were based on medieval customs developed during foreign rule were turned into a permanent stain on Hinduism itself.
At the same time, their Hindu background was downplayed by the very global movements that it spawned. Western Hindu-based groups preferred the names of Yoga, Vedanta or that of their particular guru or sect and sometimes failed to recognize their Hindu connections at all. This was because western Yoga students were so taken in by the anti-Hindu propaganda that they did not want to be associated with such an apparently regressive religion, no matter how great the spiritual teachings they found in it!
The result was that, in spite of the global spread of Hindu teachings and an independent modern India, the world still looked down upon the Hindu religion as primitive or oppressive. Some scholars were reluctant even to recognize Hinduism as a world religion, seeing it rather as a disorganized collection of various cults. The Aryan Invasion theory was used to assert that India had no indigenous culture but was a hodgepodge of various invaders, with the original Hindus being pre-Vedic Dravidians, a very different group from the Vedic sages that the country had always looked to for the origin of its traditions.

Resurgent Hinduism

This situation has begun to change dramatically during the past few years. Hindus are finally awakening to the many distortions about their religion. They are beginning to assert their rights and insist upon a proper presentation of their tradition in the world forum. More pro-Hindu political movements in India have gained power on both state and national levels, and without the anti-minority pogroms that it was insisted that they intended to do by their opponents. Such Hindu groups are largely responsible for the economic liberalization of the country, as they are the main opponents of the socialist economic policies that modern India under Nehru adopted.

Hindus, both in India and in the West, are becoming affluent through modern jobs in science, medicine and software. In the process, they are realizing that nothing in their religion is out of harmony with progress and success in the modern world. On the contrary, they have seen how Hindu family values have granted Hindu children in the West greater home and emotional stability. They have seen how the traditional Hindu emphasis on learning, including languages and mathematics, has given Hindu children an advantage in schools. In recognizing how Hindu spiritual movements have influenced the world, overseas Hindus are comfortable maintaining their religion in the countries

to which they have migrated. They are often better educated, more scientific in outlook and more affluent than their Christian neighbors who would still associate Hinduism with poverty and superstition.
Hindu groups are challenging media distortions both in India and in the West and with success; for example, protesting the use of chants from the Bhagavad Gita in erotic scenes in western movies or beef flavoring in so-called vegetarian McDonalds French fries. While such issues may seem minor, it is curious how the world media will respond to such challenges and now considers the importance of not offending Hindus because of these. Such protests help counter the sense of moral offense that westerners like to assert about Hinduism, often because of misinformed stereotypes about the religion. After a few short years, people are aware of Hinduism as a religion and must recognize Hindu activist groups that will no longer tolerate centuries old denigrations or modern stereotypes.
The Ayodhya movement in India, the effort to restore the Ram temple or Ramajanma Bhumi alias Babri Masjid—whatever one may think about it —served to awaken Hindus to their history of oppression by outside groups. It brought about a new examination of what Hinduism is and what it means to be a Hindu. While the term Hindu had long become almost a term of denigration, it is now being rediscovered as a term of pride (Hindu gaurava).

Much has been made in the western media of Hindus resisting Christian missionary activities in India, with allegations of Hindu violence against missionaries (though most of these reports were erroneous or exaggerated). Yet, a few excesses aside, it shows that Hindus are more confident of their religion than in previous decades when even devoted Hindus felt a need to invite missionaries in India as if they alone could uplift the country. Missionaries in India no longer have a free reign but must face local Hindu challenges to their attempts at conversion. This is disturbing for them because of the lack of challenge they had in the past from Hindus. In India, Christian groups still have a freedom for their activity not found in any nearby Islamic or communist states.

A New Era of Spirituality and Self-realization

Whatever particular calendar we may employ, humanity is undergoing a major change of civilization during this period. We are moving out of the industrial age into the high tech age. We are moving from nationalist cultures to an international culture. Though western civilization remains the dominant outer force in the world, we must recognize other cultural groups of which Hindu-predominant India is one of the most important.

The problem is that the new global culture is still being defined according to the same old materialistic values or by religious dogma from the Middle Ages. This has created a modern commercial culture of sensation, on one hand, and massive funding for conversion efforts on the other, mainly through petrodollars. While Christianity has declined in the West it has become more assertive in its conversion efforts in the non-Christian world, particularly India, whose traditional tolerance keeps its doors to other religions open. Even in America, the Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant sect in the country, continue a conversion effort against Hindus that labels the Hindu religion as one of the devil, at the same time promoting the Biblical view of creation in schools in America, fighting science as well.

However, longer and more powerful forces are arising than current cultural trends. The destruction of the biosphere and the deforestation of the planet must eventually force us to enter an age of ecological responsibility. This is giving birth to a new ecology philosophy, recognizing the spiritual value of the animal kingdom. Hindu Dharma is being recognized for its importance as a religion of nature. It honors the Divine everywhere in the world around us. It finds holy places on every mountain or where any rivers come together. It honors the Earth as the Divine Mother incarnate. Such a religion that embraces nature as part of

ourselves is necessary to save the planet in the years to come.

The global encounter between religions is causing people to recognize that many different religions have their validity and that no single religion, any more than any single race, can claim truth or salvation belongs to it. The old exclusive beliefs of the Middle Ages are falling under the scrutiny of a global reason that must honor all the spiritual aspirations of humanity and can no longer confine itself to the beliefs of one community.

This emerging planetary age provides a much different and more favorable scenario for Hinduism, in which it is bound to spread much further. Hinduism is the world's largest pluralistic religious tradition. It is based upon the view that there is One Truth but many paths. It is not based on any single savior, church or holy book. There are probably more religions inside of Hinduism than outside of it. Within its broad embrace can be found monotheism, polytheism, dualism, monism, pantheism and even atheism. Hindu temples accommodate many names and forms for God, many scriptures and many great sages both ancient and modern. The planetary age is a pluralistic age and must learn to do with the religions of the world what Hinduism has done with the religions of South Asia.

The coming age is one of spirituality and Self-realization, not of formal religion and subservience to

God or prophet. It is one of a spiritual culture such as we see in Hindu Dharma that embraces all life and nature. The coming planetary age does not belong to conversion-seeking religions, which divide humanity into the believers and the nonbelievers, but to the spirituality of consciousness such as revealed in yogic traditions, and sought by great mystics everywhere, which unite humanity into one great family with the entire universe.

Hindus welcome a new era of Self-realization and God-realization beyond the boundaries of dogma and institution, honoring all individuals, all cultures and all spiritual aspiration. Let us honor that Self in all beings regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity or culture. This will not only lead us to a truly new millennium but also allow us to transcend time and karma altogether, which is the real goal of our eternal striving.

Part I.5

India at a Crossroads

What is the secret of this great and enduring culture of India?

The unique feature of Indian or Bharatiya culture is unity-in-multiplicity or what could be called ‘Vedic pluralism.’ The oldest Indian text and perhaps the oldest book in the world, the Rigveda boldly proclaims: “That which is the One Truth the seers teach in many different ways (Rigveda I.164.46),” and “May noble aspirations come to us from every side (Rigveda I.89.1).”

The Indic view is that though Truth is One the paths are many. There is no need for any religious exclusivism or cultural uniformity. Many different religions and philosophies must exist relative to the different levels and temperaments of individuals. Even atheism has a place as one possible view of reality for the human mind. A free discussion and representation of all views is necessary to arrive at truth. Even errors and mistakes must be allowed in a free inquiry into truth. Truth can never be destroyed through scrutiny or examination. It is only behind closed doors or in fixed dogma that truth cannot stand.

Vedic pluralism, however, is not mere polytheism or separatism. It is a recognition of a unity that transcends name and form. The Hindu sense of the One is also that of the infinite. Its unity is of the universal, not of one thing as opposed to another, but as the one thing, like a single thread, that links all things together. Such a deep inner unity can embrace a multiple expression, just as the ocean can hold many waves and not get disturbed by them.

This bedrock of Indic pluralism gave rise to the many different sects of Hinduism, which remains the most diverse religious tradition in the world with its Vedic, Tantric, Shaivite, Shakta, Vaishnava and other sects both ancient and modern. It also provided the ground for Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh traditions, which themselves have much diversity. It spawned perhaps the greatest diversity of spiritual teachings in the entire world. It respects science and art as part of our spiritual quest, building a great material culture as well as wonderful temples. On its basis people in India could even come to appreciate the spiritual aspects of less tolerant religious groups who invaded them from across the border. Though still largely misunderstood in the West as polytheism or a worship of many Gods, this Bharatiya (Indic) pluralism reflects an open quest for truth and a free flowering of all true human potentials such as the world desperately needs today.

Unfortunately, over the first fifty years since independence India has not discovered its real roots or reclaimed its true soul as a civilization. Its intellectuals have mimicked western trends in thought, particularly Marxism, even after these have been discredited in the West, following them with an almost uncritical Hindu type of devotion[2]. In an excessive pursuit of secularism they found it necessary to denigrate their own pluralistic traditions and favor foreign ideologies of religious or political exclusivism. They have forgotten their great modern sages like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo who projected futuristic views of the Indian tradition and instead adulate western thinkers devoid of any spiritual realization. They look at India with jaded eyes and find its salvation in foreign lands. While many westerners come to India seeking spiritual knowledge, Indian intellectuals look to the West with admiration, pursuing materialistic ideologies that have left them unable to understand their own more spiritual traditions. The result is that after fifty years of independence India has not truly awakened; though it may be stirring in its sleep.

We are now entering into a global age in which pluralism must be the foundation of world culture. We

[2] In fact, the Marxist shrines in Bengal look like Hindu temples and Marxists use pictures and statues of their leaders just as Hindus do of their Gods and Goddesses.

can no longer pretend that only one race, one culture or one religion alone is true. The dawning century is no longer a missionary and colonial era in which one group can be allowed hegemony in the world. It is a new age of dialogue and respect in which we learn to honor and cherish all the cultures of the world. This should start with the honoring of tribal cultures that are the custodians of the Earth and the wisdom of nature that we so quickly losing in this artificial age. It must include not just dominant western religions, but the great traditions of the East, like Hinduism and Buddhism, which have a firm foundation in tolerance and synthesis. We must learn to embrace all human beings and their cultures as part of one great family (Vasudhaiva kutumbakam). We can certainly have our differences but should respectfully allow others to be different as well. Let our differences be a cause for admiration and celebration, not for mistrust, hatred and a seeking to eliminate them.

The dharmic traditions of India emphasize an organic pluralism as the model for human development. Just as the human body is one but has different organs that perform various functions for the benefit of the whole, so human society is one in essence but diverse in function, with each person like each cell of the body playing a vital role. This is not a model of democratic uniformity. It recognizes that the male an the female, the young and the old, the artist, thinker, businessman,

politician and yogi, with all their differences, all have their special place in society, which is enriched by their diversity.

Yet Bharatiya Pluralism is not a relativism of anything goes. Its foundation lies in universal values like ahimsa, not wishing harm to any other creature and not seeking to interfere with the natural order. It is a pluralism that reflects a respect for the sacred in all things. It is not a pluralism of hedonism or materialism like that of the West that is insensitive of the environment or of other cultures. It is a pluralism of the spirit, not simply of the body; a pluralism of spiritual teachings, not merely of material choices.

It is time for India once more to be a leader and an innovator in world culture, rather than a follower and imitator as at present. To accomplish this, India must discover its own voice and initiate its own action in the global forum. Sri Aurobindo once remarked that India's real role was to be the guru among the nations of the world. At present it can hardly keep order within its own frontiers. The country is crushed by its own bureaucracy, though this grip is gradually loosening. Perhaps because of long foreign rule India developed a sense of apathy and resignation and a tolerance for oppression and inequality. This must go.

A new vitality and creativity is necessary for India that honors the spirit of the country's venerable traditions but does not restrict itself to previous outdated forms.

This requires a new generation of thinkers who are global in outlook but grounded in the spirituality of Yoga and Vedanta. Indic thinkers must return to their cultural wellsprings, not to stop there, but to create a new vision of the future. Out of the old Upanishads they need to envision new Upanishads.

Such a new India would combine science and spirituality in a global perspective, combining the wisdom of ancient rishis with that of modern creative thinkers. It would set forth a new spiritual or yogic science showing us how to realize the consciousness that is the foundation of the entire universe and the basis of universal law. It would develop our material potentials but for the greater glory of the Spirit, the Self of all beings. It would protect the earth which reaching into outer space. It would raise the downtrodden, not to convert people to a belief but to help all people realize their highest potential. Such an awakened India is crucial for world culture, which presently remains trapped between a destructive consumerism on one side and a rigid religious exclusivism on the other.

We can already see how such traditional Indian disciplines as Yoga, Ayurveda and Vedanta are gaining respect worldwide for their global vision. Such an Indic or Dharmic perspective should be added to religion, philosophy, science and medicine all over the world. The new India and the new generation of Indians should take up this task of world-making as their goal.

The new world order of the computer and the information revolution gives the country a new chance in the global arena and offers a situation more favorable to its unique talents. But for this to occur India must stand up and speak out according to its real essence-which is as a spiritual superpower-regardless of whether this pleases everyone else in the world.
Today there is only one superpower in the world, the United States. But it is a superpower in the outer world only. Its wealth hides a spiritual poverty and growing psychological and social unrest. No technological superpower can properly guide the world in the planetary age. Only a spiritual superpower can do this. India has the potential to be the world’s spiritual superpower, but it requires a great labor to bring it forth. The question is whether the country and its leaders are willing to make the effort. This requires looking back to the inspiration of the great rishis and yogis of the region, not merely following current political and economic compulsions—but looking back only to go forward with a renewed sense of mission and power.

Part I.6

The Crisis in the Psyche of India

A defeatist tendency exists in the psyche of modern Indians perhaps unparalleled in any other country today. An inner conflict bordering on a civil war rages in the minds of the country's elite. The main effort of its cultural leaders appears to be to pull the country down or remake it in a foreign image, as if little Indian and certainly nothing Hindu was worthy of preserving or even reforming.

The elite of India suffers from a fundamental alienation from the traditions and culture of the land that would not be less poignant had they been born and raised in a hostile country. The ruling elite appears to be little more than a native incarnation of the old colonial rulers who haughtily lived in their separate cantonments, neither mingling with the people nor seeking to understand their customs. This new English-speaking aristocracy prides itself in being disconnected from the very soil and people that gave it birth.

There is probably no other country in the world where it has become a national pastime among its educated class to denigrate its own culture and history, however great that has been over the many millennia of its existence. When great archaeological discoveries of India's past are found, for example, they are not a

subject for national pride but are ridiculed as an exaggeration, if not an invention, as if they represent only the imagination of backward chauvinistic elements within the culture.

There is probably no other country where the majority religion, however enlightened, mystical or spiritual, is ridiculed, while minority religions, however fundamentalist or even militant, are doted upon. The majority religion and its institutions are taxed and regulated while minority religions receive tax benefits and have no regulation or even monitoring. While the majority religion is carefully monitored and limited as to what it can teach, minority religions can teach what they want, even if anti-national or backward in nature. Books are banned that offend minority religious sentiments but praised if they cast insults on majority beliefs.

There is probably no other country where regional, caste and family loyalties are more important than the national interest, even among those who claim to be democratic, socialist or caste reformers. Political parties exist not to promote a national agenda but to sustain one region or group of people in the country at the expense of the whole. Each group wants as big a piece of the national pie as it can get, not realizing that the advantages it gains mean deprivation for other groups. Yet when those who were previously deprived gain

power, they too seek the same unequal advantages that causes further inequality and discontent.

India's affirmative action code is by far the most extreme in the world, trying to raise up certain segments of the population regardless of merit, and prevent others from gaining positions however qualified they may be. In the guise of removing caste, a new castism has arisen where one's caste is more important than one's qualifications either in gaining entrance into a school or in finding a job when one graduates. Anti-Brahminism has often become the most virulent form of castist thinking. People view the government not as their own creation but as a welfare state from they should take the maximum personal benefit, regardless of the consequences for the country as a whole.

Outside people need not pull Indians down. Indians are already quite busy keeping any of their people and the country as a whole from rising up. They would rather see their neighbors or the nation fail if they are not given the top position. It is only outside of India that Indians succeed, often remarkably well, because their native talents are not stifled by the dominant cultural self-negativity and rabid divisiveness that exists in the country today.

Political parties in India see gaining power as a means of amassing personal wealth and robbing the nation. Political leaders include gangsters, charlatans and

buffoons who would stop short at nothing to gain power for themselves and their coteries. Even so-called modern or liberal parties resemble more the courts of kings, where personal loyalty is more important than any democratic participation. Once they gain power politicians routinely do little but cheat the people for their own advantage. Even honest politicians find that they cannot function without some deference to the more numerous corrupt leaders who often have a stranglehold on the bureaucracy.

Politicians divide the country into warring vote banks and place one community against another. They offer favors to communities like bribes to make sure that they are elected or stay in power. They campaign on slogans that appeal to community fears and suspicions rather than create any national consensus or harmony. They hold power based upon blame and hatred rather than on any positive programs for social change. They inflame the uneducated masses with propaganda rather than work to make people aware of real social problems like overpopulation, poor infrastructure or lack of education.

Should a decent government come to power, the opposition pursues pulling it down as its main goal, so that they can gain power for themselves. The idea of a constructive or supportive opposition is hard to find. The goal is to gain power for oneself and to not allow anyone else to succeed.

To further their ambitions Indian politicians will manipulate the foreign press to denigrate their opponents, even if it means spreading lies and rumors and making the country an anathema in the eyes of the outside world. Petty conflicts in India are blown out of proportion in the foreign media, not by foreign journalists but by Indians seeking to use the media to score points against their own opponents in the country. The Indians who are responsible for the news of India in the foreign press spread venom and distortion about their own country, perhaps better than any foreigner who dislikes the culture ever could.

The killing of one Christian missionary becomes a national media event of anti-Christian attacks while the murder of hundreds of Hindus is taken casually as without any real importance, as if only the deaths of white-skinned people mattered, not the slaughter of the natives. Missionary aggression is extolled as social upliftment, while Hindu efforts at self-defense against the conversion onslaught are portrayed as rabid fundamentalism. One Indian journalist even lamented that western armies would not come to India to chastise the political groups he was opposed to, as if he was still looking for the colonial powers to save him!

Let us look at the type of leaders that India has had with its Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Jayalalita or Subrahmanya Swamy to mention but a few. Such individuals are little more than warlords who

surround themselves with sycophants. Modern Indian politicians appear more like colonial rulers looting their own country, following a divide and rule policy, to keep the people so weak that their power cannot be challenged. Corruption exists almost everywhere and bribery is the main way to do business in nearly all fields. India has an entrenched bureaucracy that resists change and stifles development, just out of sheer obstinacy and not wanting to give up any control.

The Congress Party, the oldest in this predominantly Hindu nation, has given its leadership to an Italian Catholic woman simply because as the widow of the last Gandhi prime minister, she carries the family torch, as if family loyalty were still the main basis of political credibility in the country. And such a leader and a party are deemed progressive!

The strange thing is that India is not a banana republic of recent vintage but one of the oldest and most venerable civilizations in the world. Its culture is not trumpeting a militant and fundamentalist religion trying to conquer the world for the one true faith but represents a vaster and more cosmic vision. India has given birth to the main religions that have dominated East Asia historically, the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh, which are noted for tolerance and spirituality. It has produced Sanskrit, perhaps the world's greatest language. It has given us the incredible spiritual systems of Yoga and its great traditions of meditation and Self-

realization. As the world looks forward to a more universal model of spirituality and a world view defined by consciousness rather than by religious dogma these traditions are perhaps the most important legacy to draw upon for creating a future enlightened civilization.
Yet the irony is that rather than embracing its own great traditions, the modern Indian psyche prefers to slavishly imitate worn out trends in western intellectual thought like Marxism or even to write apologetics for Christian and Islamic missionary aggression. Though living in India, in proximity to temples, yogis and great festivals, most modern Indian intellectuals are oblivious to the soul of the land. They might as well be living in England or China for all they know of their own country. They are isolated in their own alien ideas as if in a tower of iron. If they choose to rediscover India it is more likely to occur by reading the books of western travelers visiting the country, than by their own direct experience of the people around them.
The dominant Indian intelligentsia cannot appreciate even the writings of the many great modern Indian sages, like Vivekananda or Aurobindo, who wrote in good English and understood the national psyche and how to revive. It is as if they were so successfully brainwashed against their own culture that they cannot even look at it, even if presented to them clearly in a modern light!

Given such a twisted and self-negative national psyche, can there be any hope for the country? At the surface the situation looks quite dismal. India appears like a nation without nationalism or at least without any national pride or any real connection to its own history. Self-negativity and even a cultural self-hatred abound. The elite that dominates the universities, the media, the government and the business arenas is the illegitimate child of foreign interests and is often still controlled by foreign ideas and foreign resources. It cannot resist a bribe and there is much money from overseas to draw upon. Indian politicians do not hesitate to sell their country down the river and it does not require a high price.

Fortunately signs of a new awakening can be found. There is a new interest in the older traditions of the country and many people now visit temples and tirthas. Many young people now want to follow the older heritage of the land and revive it in the modern age. The computer revolution and the new science are reconnecting with the great intelligence of the Indian psyche that produced the unfathomable mantras of the Vedas. Slowly but surely a new intelligentsia is arising and now several important journalists are writing and exposing the hypocrisy of the anti-Hindu Indian elite. Yet only if this trend grows rapidly can there be a real counter to the defeatist trend of the country. But it requires great effort, initiative and creativity, not simply

lamenting over the past but envisioning a new future in harmony with the deeper aspirations of the region.

One must also not forget that the English-educated elite represents only about three percent of the country, however much power they wield. The remaining population is much more likely to preserve the older traditions of the land. Even illiterate villagers often know more of real Indian culture than do major Indian journalists and writers.

Meanwhile overseas Hindus have become successful, well educated and affluent, not by abandoning their culture but by holding to it. They see Hindu culture not as a weakness but as a strength. Free of the Indian nation and its fragmented psyche, they can draw upon their cultural resources in a way that people born in India seldom can. Perhaps they can return to the country and become its new leaders.

However, first this strange alienated elite has to be removed and they will not do so without a fight. The sad thing is that they would probably rather destroy their own country than have it function apart from their control. The future of India looks like a new Kurukshetra and it requires a similar miracle for victory. Such a war will be fought not on some outer battlefield but in the hearts and minds of people, in where they choose to draw their inspiration and find their connection with life.

Yet regardless of outer appearances, the inner soul of the land cannot be put down so easily. It has been nourished by many centuries of tapas by great yogis and sages. This soul of Bharat Mata will rise up again through Kali (destruction) to Durga (strength). The question is how long and difficult the process must be.

Part I.7

Western Monoculture and Indic Pluralism

The Spread of the Monoculture

Western civilization, in spite of claims to support diversity, is promoting a worldwide monoculture—the same basic values, institutions and points of view for everyone—which it calls 'globalization'. Western commercial culture with its pursuit of markets and commodities eliminates all true culture, which is based on quality, not quantity. It creates a culture of money that submerges any true culture of refinement or spirituality, in which everything can be bought and sold, possessed or capitalized on.

If we visit shopping malls in America today, for example, it is hard to tell what state in the country we are located in. The shopping malls in Florida, California, New York or the Midwest have the same basic stores and sell the same basic products. The streets look the same, as do the houses, apartment buildings and office buildings. People eat the same basic types of food and have the same habits of work, sleep and relaxation. Almost everything is mass-produced and follows the same economy driven forces.

These same types of businesses pioneered in America are spreading worldwide, whether it is Coca Cola, McDonalds, blue jeans or Barbie dolls. One finds the

same multinational corporations operating in nearly every major city of the world, whether Tokyo, Shanghai, Mumbai or London. While one finds foreign stores like Chinese restaurants in shopping malls even in America, which have their niche in the global scene, these operate according to the same commercial approach as standard western businesses. They do not represent real globalization but a co-opting of foreign businesses by the western commercial culture.

The world media is yet more of a monoculture. News services worldwide provide what are essentially the same stories from the same cultural slant. They are standardized in a western model and promote a western point of view with western ideals of free trade, social equality, democracy and affluence. People all over the world watch Hollywood movies, listen to the pop music of the US and Europe, and adulate American athletes.

Similarly, in the universities of the world, it is mainly western civilization that is taught, even if there is an old and profound civilization. In a country like India, Shakespeare is a much better known and quoted poet than Kalidas, the equivalent great Sanskrit poet. The West honors the Japanese for enthusiastically taking up western culture, music and entertainment. But it regards as close-minded or communal, cultures that try to hold their own ground and avoid the consumerist assimilation.

The Danger of Monoculture

This consumerist monoculture is a great leveler of culture. Wherever it goes it either destroys or co-opts the local culture. It destroys local culture by ending native traditions and replacing them with western business, political, religious or intellectual models. It co-opts them by turning local arts and crafts into exotic ware for mass marketing, for example, how Native American culture has been turned into a big business in the US, though the money seldom goes to the natives!

Monoculture results in 'deculturalization' in which entire cultures and civilizations are subverted or eliminated. Modern commercial culture is monopolistic and seeks hegemony, though it allows a diversity within its ranks so long as it doesn't interfere with its expansionist aims.

We can compare this social monoculture with plant monoculture. Monoculture in farming occurs when the same crops are planted over and again in the same soil. The result is that the soil gets exhausted. Monoculture in nature occurs when the diversity of plant species is destroyed by deforestation and a few species, often of foreign origin, are planted instead or simply flourish as weeds. Monoculture in agriculture and forestry result in the loss of both plant and animal species. Similarly,

monoculture in human culture brings about the loss of cultural and individual diversity. Today we are witnessing, generally silently, an appalling and rapid disappearance of traditional cultures. Languages, the hallmark of culture, are passing away in the world at a rapid rate. Monoculture with its standardization and uniformity is the rule. Franchise is the game in businesses of all types. Local and home owned stores are disappearing, just as the family farm has given way to global agribusiness run by large oil companies (like Exxon owning vast tracts of farmland in California)!

We can draw a further analogy between the monoculture and the use of terminator seeds, which when planted render native seeds sterile. The real purpose of such seeds is not to increase food production but to make farmers worldwide dependent on seed banks for further crops that puts them under control of the global agribusiness. The monoculture tries to control the rules of debate and the presentation of ideas worldwide, which all goes back to it for validation. People only gain validity in their field when famous or recognized by the monoculture and its media. Representatives of other cultural traditions don't count for anything. The result is that people go to monoculture institutions to gain credibility even in their local cultural disciplines. In the Indian context, Indian scholars seek their credentials not in their own temples and ashrams of their own country but in western

institutions like Heidelberg, Oxford or Harvard, or in westernized departments of their own countries like at JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University), the center of leftist thought in India. Such scholars become opponents of their own cultural traditions, supplanting native schools of thought with the cultural seeds of the West, putting an end to their own independent traditions of thought which they are supposed to represent!

The destruction of cultural diversity, like that of biodiversity, is devastating to living systems. The loss of cultural diversity does to human beings what the destruction of biodiversity does to the world of nature. Just as we are destroying our outer landscape of forests and wilderness, so we are destroying our inner landscape of art and spirituality. Our minds are as polluted as our rivers.

Monoculture and the Quality of Life

Monoculture claims to improve life by raising 'living standards'. People all over the world make what is on paper a much higher income than that of their parents. With this income they can buy computers, televisions, stereos, or whatever the latest technological equipment happens to be. They can afford to go to restaurants, watch movies or travel and stay in expensive hotels. However, this increased 'paper wealth' is deceptive. Their houses, which on paper are

worth phenomenally more than those of their parents, are usually smaller and much more expensive to maintain. In fact, housing shortages are everywhere. The beautiful scenery of nature that used to surround human habitats is replaced by a bleak urban environment of cement, glass and steel, in which the garden is but a few potted plants on a terrace overlooking the street!

The quality of air and water has been greatly reduced all over the world. Our cities have air that is unhealthy to breathe. Most of our water is unfit to drink. Even fish cannot live in most of our streams. The quality of food is significantly less in spite of advances in corporate farming. Fast food and over-spiced restaurant food replace the home grown or freshly cooked food of previous generations. Good quality fresh fruit and vegetables, which used to be commonly available, are now only rarely found in special natural food stores in the West at a special price.

The monoculture person has less real leisure time than previous generations. We are busy all week long working, using our spare time for shopping or other chores. There are few local cultural events of music, plays, festivals and dance and even these have been commercialized and are spectator events, not the participatory events of earlier times. They have no aura of the sacred that the rituals of previous generations often had. The real victim of monoculture, therefore, is

the individual who is deprived of any direct contact with nature, the universe, a community, himself or herself.

The movement toward monoculture arose through the industrial revolution and the printing press that could standardize information. It mushroomed in the twentieth century with global industrialization. Now with the computer and media age it is far advanced, moving forward at times almost like a blind steamroller crushing everything in its path.

Monoculture and Monotheism

The roots of monoculture in western civilization can be traced to monotheism, particularly of a missionary type—the effort to impose a belief in only One God of a certain type on all people, ignoring all other spiritual paths, however old or rich in ideas and experiences. This One God appears as a tyrannical, if not militant being who has a severe set of rewards and punishments—which necessitates a single savior, bible and church for the entire world. Whether this was the original intent of the prophets or a deviation, it has come to represent the dominant trend in western religious thinking and the orientation of western culture both religious and secular.

Under early Christianity, monotheism allied itself with Roman imperialism and an allegiance to the state—

which was a political monoculture—turning a religious rigidity into a military weapon. In the colonial era, western monoculture became a cult of church and empire as a means of conquering the world, to make everyone western and Christian in civilization. Monoculture extends from an expansionist monotheism, which is monoculture in religion and destroys religious diversity and individual spiritual experience that is only possible apart from any church and its dogma. It leads to other forms of monoculture politically, economically, socially and intellectually.

Western monotheism is essentially an authoritarian tradition and monotheistic institutions like the Vatican are authoritarian hierarchies to the present day, with orders being imposed upon the masses from on above. The dogma of the book, prophet or savior and One God cannot be questioned. Anti-blasphemy laws remain in effect in so-called Islamic 'republics', making it a crime, if not a capital offense, to even question the book or the prophet. Anti-apostasy laws are also there, making it a crime for a Muslim to convert to another religion (but allowing members of other religions to convert to Islam). Such laws were present in medieval Christianity where they were used to oppress science and stop any freethinking.

Today, however, Christians have put a new spin on their monotheism. They would equate monotheism, if not Christianity itself, with unity, equality and democracy—

One God and one humanity. However, this is done without changing the exclusive and monopolistic nature of Christian beliefs or institutions, making one doubt its sincerity. The current pope, for example, though really a conservative figure, has used this form of propaganda to justify Catholic conversion efforts in the world. He would have us believe that promoting an authoritarian church and its antiquated dogma was somehow liberal and would advance political freedom, particularly in non-Christian countries, where the church would come in to save people from anti-democratic governments and social inequalities! He speaks out against the lack of freedom and democracy in various countries without introducing these into his own church first!

Monotheism and Christianity are being equated in the West with democracy and human rights, though this was certainly no part of their colonial rule. We should look at Central and South America, where an alliance of the church with dictators and military rulers has been long standing, and which continue to have a great inequality between the rich and the poor, those of European blood and the native Indians. We must remember that the fascist dictators of Europe and America, including Mussolini, were good Catholics that the church did not seriously oppose. Yet those who oppose the missionaries today in the third world are called fascists or communalists, not the missionaries, completely ignoring the facts of history!

Monoculture, in turn, has no real problem with monotheism, though western monotheism is largely authoritarian and anti-democratic. There is no one person, one vote idea in these religions but only fiats and fatwas from on high. Monoculture treats the monotheistic church with the same dignity of any country or corporation that has economic or political

clout. This is because western monotheism has adopted the corporate model and used its numbers and resources to gain political influence and favors. It has created a global multinational religious business using the media and the Internet for proselytizing, spreading a religious message like an advertising campaign. The world media does not challenge such religious aggression, any more than it does the aggression of the fast food industry.

Nineteenth century colonial rulers, like the British in India, found missionaries to be useful, even though Europe at the time had many free thinkers questioning the church and the Bible. So too, the modern monoculture finds missionaries to be a helpful tool—even though they represent a more conservative form of Christianity than practiced by most people in the West. Such backward religious beliefs appeal to the poor and uneducated, which is why the most devout Christian countries like those in South America are

among the most backward in the world. This means that Christianity can be provide a first stage in the westernization of poorer cultures, particularly those like India that have deep religious roots.

Monoculture and Democracy

Monoculture has made a home with democracy. This may be surprising at first because democracy appears as the ultimate form of pluralism, with each individual a free and equal member of society. After all, democracy allows each person, even the poor, weak or elderly, the same one vote. However, current democracies only have the appearance of pluralism. If we look deeper, only an educated democracy can be truly pluralistic. An uneducated democracy can create its own form of totalitarianism or mob rule. The masses are easy to manipulate by money, the media or an appeal to prejudices and vote banks. Getting elected for a politician in a modern democracy is not a matter of encouraging pluralism but of manipulating public opinion with slogans and promises that are seldom kept. Charismatic movie stars can easily defeat seasoned diplomats. The modern politician resembles more a Roman emperor controlling the masses through bread and circuses than any true representative of the people or of an enlightened culture.

In addition, promoting democracy worldwide is a good tool to destroy political diversity. No other political systems are allowed today in the world but democracy of a western-style nature—which means the rule of business, the media and the monoculture, along with the promotion of western civilization. Groups agitating for a western style democracy systematically undermine other governments as if anything else were immoral, just as monotheistic religions cannot tolerate other religious views. Modern democracy does not allow for pluralism in governmental systems but requires that it is the only acceptable form, just as monotheism claims all morality for itself and equates other forms of spirituality with the devil.

Modern democracies give the vote to the isolated individual, who is easy to manipulate. Other power centers of a local kind get marginalized, just as multinational corporations and their franchises put an end to local businesses and native crafts under the guise of free trade. Modern democracies are largely state run governments and have little place for the local rule found in traditional societies, where the village, tribe or community had the rights of self-determination over the most important issues of life, health and work. The state, like the churches previously, doles out its favors and makes the individuals dependent upon it for their livelihood. Leaders pretend to be doing the will of

the people when they are only making the people subservient and keeping them ignorant.

Democracy has created an atomization of society, the reduction of all social groups to the isolated individual, who removed from more intimate social support becomes exposed and easy to influence. Without the social support of family and community, for example, the elderly end up as wards of the state, on Medicare. Such state care, though deemed compassionate, is impersonal, often cruel and masks a fundamental destruction of natural social orders. The social isolation created by modern democracy is resulting in an epidemic of depression in the West that is striking all age groups but particularly those in middle age. The prescription drug industry has become the compassionate savior of modern society, but is really getting an entire culture addicted to drugs as the solution to their mounting physical and psychological problems! Governments debate on how much money to spend on prescription drugs for the elderly, but they never ask why an entire generation is dependent upon drugs for its well-being.

Monoculture and Free Trade

Monoculture does quite well with free trade and the spread of global consumerism, which is monoculture economics. Other economic systems are not allowed

and are systematically undermined. The economic might of the monoculture levels any economic diversity, moving towards a single financial standard or currency worldwide. A uniform world economy destroys local economies and their rich diversity of expression and interactions based on an organic dependency. The rule of multinational businesses takes the place of local economies. Global corporate solutions are applied to local management issues, often with disastrous results.

Corporate agriculture, the new agricultural monoculture, for example, is advertising its ability to feed the world and end world hunger, portraying itself in the benefic aspect of the church or a socialist government selflessly aiding the poor. What it is really doing is undermining the most basic of human rights, the right to feed oneself and to control one's food sources. What the global agribusiness envisions is control of the world food market, so that it can force entire countries to bow down before it, who cannot even eat without its favor. Among its tools are genetically engineered crops, including terminator seeds that destroy local plant varieties, fertilizers that weaken the soils and breed dependency, and patents on plants that afford corporate ownership to nature's bounty. Meanwhile, those who oppose the global food business are deemed backwards, causing hunger and

starvation in the world, as if apart from the agribusiness no one could feed themselves!

Should any group oppose the monoculture, the religious, political, intellectual and economic forces of monoculture will attack it, often mercilessly. Monoculture ideas of monotheism, democracy, social equality and free trade are used as the moral torch to consume all other cultural views. They are deemed 'universal', meaning that no one can question them or look to what is really working behind them. Such 'universalism' is simply a new mask of intolerance. The very forces that try to resist monoculture are denigrated as communal, undemocratic and unprogressive, even if they are pluralistic in their approach or reflect a deep spiritual wisdom or love of nature.

For example, the Hindu effort to resist missionaries in India is portrayed in the media as a form of religious fundamentalism, while the Christian missionary aggression and intolerance of Hindu pluralism is deemed progressive. Similarly, when Hindu economic activists used the slogan of 'computer chips yes, potato chips no', resisting the American fast food industry, the western media deems the response to be backward and confused.

The Indic Model of Pluralism

The Indic model of culture is not one of monoculture but of cultural diversity, like India's landscape of many wide rivers and towering mountains. Indic civilization is based upon a pluralistic model and a synthetic approach to life's problems. It acknowledges that different points of view may be valid for different individuals and communities and encourages these to develop unhindered by any overriding church, state or business concerns. Its sense of unity arises through interdependence. We see this in Indic religions that offer many sages, yogis, teachings, a diversity of Gods and Goddesses, and a recognition of both the One and the many.

Western civilization as it has developed over the past centuries, on the other hand, is monolithic and singularistic. It imposes a single point of view on everyone. Its sense of unity arises from uniformity. We see this in western religions that require a single God, book, savior, prophet or church for everyone. The one God of western monotheism reflects this need for control, uniformity, power, retribution and revenge.

In the colonial era, western powers sought to impose their religion on Asia using force, intimidation and incentives and denigrating Indic religions as primitive, promoting conversion as a necessity for civilized growth. In the post-colonial era, western religions use the guise of democracy and human rights to continue

the same proselytizing efforts. When Indic religions oppose them, they are labeled communal, intolerant or anti-democratic.

Democracy itself has become the instrument of a consumerist totalitarianism. The masses are easily manipulated by the ability to promote and fulfill their material desires, their needs for greater entertainment or new conveniences. The Asian view is not one of democratic uniformity but of an organic order that recognizes different individual, class and cultural needs. We must look at society like the human body in which there is a unity of being but a diversity of functions. For true freedom in the world, there must be both material and spiritual freedom, which requires freedom from any cultural domination whether economically, politically or religiously.

However, certain aspects of Hindu thought and culture can become popular, trendy or commercially viable in the monoculture today. This is most obvious in the Yoga movement that is already being mass marketed and turned into franchises. Yet whether this serves to spiritualize western culture to corrupt the spiritual traditions of the East remains to be seen.

This rising interest in spirituality has occurred because the materialist monoculture leaves people inwardly empty. Material affluence has resulted in spiritual poverty and psychological malaise. It is also because western religions are rather bland affairs compared to

exotic Hinduism and all of its gurus, deities and Yoga practices. Those who have gone through the monoculture and seen its limitations are more likely to be attracted to the dharmic traditions of the East.

The question then arises whether Hindu culture is rich and diverse enough overcome the monoculture or assimilate it over time. No doubt it can do so eventually. The issue is how much time and effort and obstructions along the way will be required to change the monoculture. But for this to occur, Hindu thought and its pluralistic sense of the Divine must become part of the new paradigm. Over time, the natural human urge for diversity will also arise to counter monoculture that must lead to sterility, like monoculture in agriculture.

The movement toward global uniformity must be abandoned, not only materially but also spiritually. True globalism is not that of monoculture consumerism but based on a respect for local environments, which also means honoring local cultures. True culture is not a commercial commodity but is priceless. It is rooted in a consciousness, a state of mind, and harmony with the natural world. Keeping up with the latest trends in the market place will never take us there. To discover it we must turn our machines off and look within.

Part I.8

Religious Exclusivism, Racism and Colonialism

Recent centuries saw the European domination of the world through colonialism and imperialism. Colonial ideas were closely connected to racism and slavery, on one hand, and to religious missionary efforts on the other. These three ideas or beliefs were intimately related both in theory and in practice. Missionaries accompanied colonial armies that enslaved or turned native peoples into bonded laborers.

In the colonial era, many Europeans thought that the white race was superior to all other races that were savages, particularly dark-skinned people, whose very skin color indicated something evil. They similarly thought that Christianity, the religion of the white man, was superior to all the religions of other races, which were primitive, polytheistic and unholy. Dark skinned people and devil worship were even equated in the popular mind. The civilization of white Europe was considered to be true civilization while civilizations even of venerable ancient cultures like India and China were deemed barbaric, akin to the superstitions of tribal peoples.

Today in most of the world, we have discarded colonialism and recognized its errors at least as an overt policy (often it continues in subvert economic

forms, however). We have even more severely criticized racism and tried to eliminate it (though it also continues in various forms). Countries like South Africa that continued racist policies into the post-war era met with global scorn until they changed. The idea of the supremacy of the white race that was commonly accepted in intellectual, cultural and political circles in the West in the last century is now looked upon as backward and bigoted. However, the third component of colonial expansion—religious exclusivism—still flourishes much as it did in the previous centuries, though sometimes with a tarnished image, and is in many places as aggressive and intolerant as ever.

While colonial armies no longer go overseas, the missionary groups that used to accompany them still follow the same old paths and with the same worn mentality. Missionaries are still trained to infiltrate and undermine foreign cultures and their different religions. They still have the same arrogance and sense of superiority over non-Christian beliefs, which they will not sympathetically examine at all. Evangelic preachers still preach hellfire and damnation, particularly to Hindus, who were seen by Christians as the most idolatrous of all religions in the colonial era and still are today. The missionaries are still living in previous centuries. While we honor the right of peoples to form their own governments, the missionaries do not honor

the right of peoples to choose a non-Christian belief, which they deem as a sin against God!
Of course, the missionaries have made some adaptations to the times, particularly since they no longer have an army or colonial government to protect them. They speak of human rights and helping people achieve freedom and economic development. However, they are quite willing to destroy cultures and will not help a non-Christian culture to develop itself. They like to blame the non-Christian beliefs of other cultures for their social and economic problems, even though Christian countries in Latin and South America are among the most backward in the world. The missionaries are also quick to use the media, television and the Internet, but not to improve global communication and respect for different cultures, only to promote their global conversion agenda like a steamroller over all other points of view.
Let us be very clear about the dangers of religious exclusivism that has spawned every sort of crusade, holy war, genocide and hostility through the centuries. The idea that only one religion is true and all others are false is akin to the idea that only one race is noble and all other races are inferior. It is akin to the idea that only one culture is civilized and all other cultures, even those with great literatures of their own, are barbaric. This idea of religious exclusivism is another nineteenth century prejudice, like racism, that is out of date in the

planetary age. It reflects bigotry and narrow mindedness. It promotes communal disharmony and breeds violence.

In fact, one could argue that religious exclusivism is worse than racism. Racism says that one race is overall better than the others, which are inferior or even subhuman. Religious exclusivism states that one religion alone takes us to God, heaven or paradise while the others take us to hell or eternal damnation. It makes certain groups unholy, if not evil.

Racism calls people of other races niggers or savages. Religious exclusivism calls people of other beliefs heathens, kafirs, or devil worshippers. Which is worse? For someone to call you a derogatory racial term like nigger, or to say that you are under the influence of the devil? Clearly, to be called subhuman is bad enough, but religious exclusivism can render the others to be non-human or even demonic, which is worse.

Therefore, it is time that the countries of the world to make a call to discard religious exclusivism just as we have made a similar call to reject racism and colonialism as morally and culturally wrong. This means that first of all we must expose and criticize the danger and the bias of religious exclusivism just as we have done that of racism and colonialism. As a culture we must also stop praising religious exclusivism in the media or our educational system, just as we no longer use these to promote racism. The triumphalism of the

One true God, book, savior or prophet must be set aside just like the triumphalism of the ruling race, empire or dictator.

This means that we should strive to promote pluralism in religion as a primary cultural and societal value, as part of real human rights and a truly culturally sensitive educational system. We must recognize that spirituality cannot be owned by any belief, church, savior or creed. We must learn to welcome a diversity in spiritual practices, respecting many paths to God or truth. In this process we must honor the many non-Biblical paths that have been trampled upon as unholy, become receptive to their wisdom and help restore their place in the world. We must realize that each individual should be free to find God in his or her own way and that no institution or belief is required for this.

Naturally, religious groups that have benefited from exclusivism and promote it for missionary agendas will resist. They will try to hide the injustice of religious exclusivism under the guise religious freedom, projecting conversion to exclusive and authoritarian beliefs as a democratic right. Such diversionary tactics should be exposed. Religious exclusivism is inherently divisive and, therefore, violent. It is communal, separating humanity into the warring camps of the true believers and the non-believers. It is not the Will of God but the assertion of the individual or collective ego and a drive for domination. Let us allow the same diversity

in religion that we allow in language or art or other cultural domains.

The human religious potential and experience is so many-sided and multi-layered that it transcends all names and forms, personalities and institutions. Our true nature is Divine. It is not something we can be converted to, but something that we can discover when we set all external forms of manipulation and control aside.

Part I.9

The Hindu Response to Globalization

Globalization refers to an expansion beyond national borders that includes all aspects of human life and culture, but particularly related spheres of business, science and technology. It is the dominant theme of multinational corporations and the world media with its worldwide coverage of the news. We find people of all races, nationalities and religions participating in a global exchange of information, ideas and commodities. Globalization has brought about a migration of many peoples, including a Hindu Diaspora. There are now significant Hindu minorities in North America and UK not as old indentured servants but as part of a new cultural elite of computer programmers, doctors and engineers. Peoples are mixing all over the world, as the whole planet gradually becomes a single melting pot.

However, globalization is often projected uncritically as if it reflected some necessary good for everyone. Certainly the benefits of globalization are evident in greater affluence, better communication and advancements in technology that have reached most of the planet. But globalization has its shadows with a deteriorating effect on the environment and an alarming persistence of poverty in various nations, including a few already extensively exposed to

globalization. It remains to be seen whether the benefits of this current globalization will outweigh its long-term harm to the environment and to cultural diversity.

Planetary Thinking

A related term to globalization is 'planetary.' Some thinkers speak of a new 'planetary age', in which we are becoming cognizant of ourselves as citizens of the entire globe rather than only loyal to a particular country, culture or religion. Planetary could be called the positive side of globalization and implies a genuine concern for nature. It refers to a holistic vision of life and of the earth. It indicates the need to protect not only the natural environment, but also traditional cultures and non-western ways of living.

Perhaps the main idealistic pursuit in the West today is ecology, which flows out of this planetary vision. Ecologists are thinking in planetary terms, not simply in nationalistic or even human terms. Because of their planetary perspective, they are opposed to globalization in which business interests override human and natural needs, like the cutting down of the rainforests by multinational corporations.

Multiculturalism and the Clash of Cultures

A third related term to consider is 'multiculturalism'. This implies that we must consider the needs and values of all cultures throughout the world—that no single culture should dominate all humanity. It means that not only European but also African and Asian cultural models have their importance and their place in the world order.

Yet multiculturalism connects with its opposite, the idea of the 'clash of cultures' made famous in the recent works of Samuel Huntington. In this view the different cultural spheres of the world, like the western European, Islamic or Hindu are like the hostile nations of old. We are in an era of cultural warfare, not so much through the battlefield as through the media and through economics. Cultural spheres rather than national boundaries are the main lines of division and confrontation.

Cultural chauvinism and isolationism still continues in the era of globalization, even among the countries supposed to be the most global in their views. For example, the average American, from the very country pioneering globalization, is unlikely to speak any language other than English and is unable to explain even the basics of foreign cultures or religions. During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, it was found that over fifty percent of Americans didn't even know where the Persian Gulf was located on the globe. Americans remain apathetic about foreign affairs even while

aggressively spreading their culture worldwide. The American view of globalization is people all over the world becoming American or adapting an American consumerist life-style. We must recognize that this is not true globalization at all and reflects a narrow point of view, not planetary thinking.

The Down Side of Globalization

The negative side of globalization is a disturbing neo-colonialism— the continued projection of western and European civilization and its values for everyone, just as in the colonial era. The new multinational corporations appear like a continuation of old colonial businesses like the East India Company. Modern technology allows companies to control other countries without the need of a military presence, through money, capital and media alone, which doesn't necessarily make such control more just or less obtrusive.

Most of the values behind the current globalization are the same as those of colonialism, which are those of western culture. The West considers its culture to be universal, though it is only one of many in the world. The old colonial rulers had the same view of their culture as the best for everyone on the planet. The West sees not only its scientific view of the world as for good for all, but also its intellectual culture and its religions as the best, if not the only the legitimate ones.

While Americans are proud of Asians wearing blue jeans they are quite suspicious of Americans wearing turbans or chanting Sanskrit mantras.

Slavery characterized the colonial era, along with a division of humanity into civilized and primitive nations. Such slavery was abolished by law but continues in a new form. The modern world has a corresponding division of rich and poor, developed and developing (or undeveloped) nations. Poor assembly line workers in Asia are much like the slaves of the last century and not always much better cared for. This gap between rich and poor nations is increasing rather than decreasing. The recent economic crisis in East Asia shows that economic development in the Third World may not be continuous but may go through a decline or crash before ever reaching its expected goals.

Materialism for All

Globalization is not so much a respect for cultures all over the world as it is a case of cultures all over the world following a western, particularly American life-style and mode of behavior. In the American model of life, business and money is the main concern, with material affluence the goal of all striving. The culture is one of entertainment and recreation, with shopping

malls, giant movie screens and huge sports arenas as the modern temples.

This new multiculturalism expects everyone to pursue wealth and technology and follow the life-style guidelines of the western media. It has little concern for religion, which after all in the West, is mainly a formality that few take seriously. Or it turns religion into a business, honoring religions that use an aggressive and ruthless marketing of their products. It has no spiritual concern or regard for Moksha or liberation from the material world. It is quite happy in the material world and only seeks to find new ways to enjoy it better.

Yet the very success of this materialism has caused many in the West to begin to question it and look for a more spiritual way of life. This has brought them in the direction of the East and India in particular, pursuing Yoga and meditation, which are gradually becoming popular in the West.

Globalization of Hinduism on a Spiritual Level

The globalization of Hindu Dharma on a spiritual level occurred some time ago, going back at least to Ramakrishna in the last century. In fact modern Hindu gurus have been the main pioneers of a new universal, global or planetary spirituality, not limited to any particular church, savior or belief. They have not

spoken or taught merely as Hindus, or as opposing other religions, but as seeking a spiritual approach that synthesizes the best in all human striving under the understanding that humanity is one family and all of the human spiritual heritage belongs to each of us.

Modern Hindu gurus have tried in a pluralistic, global and multicultural way to take what is best in all religions and respect the truth wherever it occurs. They have projected themselves more as universal teachers and their teaching of Yoga and Vedanta as universal paths, rather than portraying themselves as sectarian Hindus. Some have been projected as avataras of new global or planetary religions beyond any religious affiliation even that of Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma. These views have given Hindu gurus some popularity in the West and some following by western students, even by those who have not become Hindus or who have preserved their own religious beliefs.

Even Hollywood has taken an interest in Yoga and in Buddhism, showing that media influences are not always against the deeper knowledge behind the Indic traditions. New Age and counter cultural trends in the West carry a strong interest in Eastern religions, including various Hindu teachers and teachings. Hindu bhajans are beginning to become popular in the pop music circle in America. Ayurvedic medicine and even Vedic astrology are gaining adherents in the West, and

often among the more educated and affluent members of society.

Misuse of Hindu Tolerance

Yet there has been a down side to this Hindu universalism as well. The Hindu recognition of Christ as a great yogi, for example, has been used as part of missionary propaganda to convert Hindus. Many Catholics claim to see value in Indian philosophies like Vedanta, but only like what earlier Christians saw in pagan Greek philosophers, a good philosophical base on which to build their own conversion efforts, not a genuine respect for an independent tradition.

Hindu tolerance of Islam has allowed many Hindu girls to marry Muslims and become Muslims but it has not resulted in Muslims respecting Hinduism or allowing their girls to convert to Hinduism to marry Hindu boys. In short this Hindu universalism has seldom been reciprocated and often been abused.

The multifaith era has some advantage for Hinduism because it recognizing a pluralism in religion, which is perhaps the essence of Hinduism, but even here Hinduism has not always done well. The problem is that multifaith groups tend to interpret religion in a Biblical sense as one God and one Book or even one prophet or savior, projecting a monotheistic model as universal for everyone. Western religious leaders only come to

admire Hinduism when it appears like monotheism, when the Vedas are the Bible, or when Krishna is like the Son of God. Some Hindus are too quick to make these equations not realizing that they are not creating an understanding or tolerance of Hinduism but merely catering to western religious views.

The Challenge to Hinduism from Globalization

Hindu culture and spirituality, though spreading in their influence in the new global arena, are still being undermined by outside influences. The global age still poses a major challenge to Hindu spirituality through missionary efforts, just as in the colonial era. The global media and global money possess an inherent bias for western cultures and religions. Christian and Islamic groups have money and media power to target Hindus and continue to do so on a large scale, not only in the West where Hindus are recent immigrants but in India itself. For them globalization still means one religion for everyone and the end of religious traditions different than their own. While only about a fifth of Americans are fundamentalist Christians and while the predominant American culture tends to belittle them as backward, they still can mobilize massive resources for their overseas conversion efforts, holding a large fraction of the resources of an enormously rich nation.

Global business presents a challenge to Hindu spirituality because it projects a materialistic model for the entire world, including for India. It is hardly a culture of enlightenment that global business is bringing to the world but junk food like coca cola, movies saturated with sex and violence, and a naive adulation of athletes and movie stars as the most desirable human types. Such a commercial culture undermines spiritual cultures like those in India. It places a strong imprint of enjoyment on the minds of people so that the pursuit of liberation, which implies simplicity and asceticism, is forgotten.

Hindu Responses to Globalization

However, there has been little organized Hindu response to globalization, either to its advantages or disadvantages. Hinduism tends to be otherworldly and not to react quickly to temporal changes. Hinduism also is not very well organized socially or intellectually to tackle such outer issues in a major way. Some Hindus think that they need not make any response to globalization other than to continue their spiritual practices. However, when they see their children adopting western commercial culture or changing to a hostile western religious belief they often have a rude awakening.

Perhaps the most obvious Hindu response is that to the global evangelical movement. Movements like Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), or its older prototype the Arya Samaj, have arisen to counter this trend, helping to reconvert Hindus who have joined these other religions. Yet even in spite of the rapid growth of such organizations, most Hindu groups make little effort in this regard, still thinking that the religion people follow doesn't matter because all religions are good.

Another part is the Hindu response to global business. One effort, going back to Mahatma Gandhi, is to try to protect the villages of India from global business and promote a swadeshi movement. Another effort is to promote technological development but try to avoid western commercial culture as in the BJPs slogan of "computer chips yes, potato chips no." A social and spiritual effort is that of the Swadhyaya movement of Pandurang Shastri Athavale which aims at creating a more indigenous Indic model for the spread of spirituality and the protection of families and villages. This is an important trend that needs more work and attention.

The Hindu response to environmental and ecological concerns, though rapidly growing, has also been rather weak. India has already been devastated in terms of its ecology and this trend is increasing at an alarming rate. There is little organized Hindu effort to counter this, the great Hindu tradition of Bhumi Puja and love for

Mother Earth notwithstanding. That Hindus have forgotten their connection with the Earth is perhaps their greatest falling from their older and deeper traditions. The Hindu ecological movement needs to get much more attention and support from Hindu groups throughout the world.

The Hindu use of the global media remains inefficient, where a positive Hindu view is seldom presented. The notable exception to this is the Internet where, for example, the Hindu Universe (hindunet.org) is a well-organized and popular site. India has more software technicians than any country in the world so it has the capacity to increase its Internet presence dramatically. Magazines like Hinduism Today have arisen as a modern voice for the concerns of the Hindu community and to bring it together on a common platform. Though starting off from a very limited circulation base, the magazine continues to grow at a rapid rate. Unfortunately there are few efforts in this direction that do not get beyond promoting a particular sect.

Groups like VHP, not only in India but also in the West, have created meetings for Hindu religious leaders or Dharma Sansads in order to unite Hindus to face the challenges of the current era, as well as to dialogue with other religious groups. However some Hindus, being suspicious of any regimentation, have dismissed these efforts not as a real attempt to unite Hindu society but as having ulterior political motives. While

one may question any such efforts, that a better organized Hindu response would be helpful I don't think is really disputable to anyone who really thinks about the dangers of this era.

A Call to Action

The main conclusion here, therefore, is that there should be a better Hindu response to globalization. While Hindus have the ideological foundation for this, they are weak in implementation. In projecting a united front or common cause, different Hindu groups should work out their responses in a typical pluralistic Hindu manner.

They need all not agree with one another. They can tackle the matter from different angles and approaches. But action of some sort, wherever one can start, is necessary. The response should not only be spiritual but also in the educational, economic, scientific and media realms, recognizing the special challenges posed by the type of civilization that we have today.

As this action occurs a new churning will take place within Hindu Dharma that can revitalize and transform it once more for this planetary age, in which it can again extend throughout the world and spread its benefits to all peoples. Hindu Dharma has a cosmic vision that is quite in harmony with the planetary era and capable of

receiving a global regard and aiding in a new global vision, if it would but communicate itself better in the global forum.

Part I.10

The Hindu View of Society and Its Global Relevance

Hindu Dharma contains a wealth of thought on social issues and a long tradition of social sciences. These begin with an extensive ancient literature of Dharma Shastras and Dharma Sutras, of which the well-known Manu Smriti is not the only one (or the last word for that matter). Even epics like the Mahabharata have many passages on the social order. Many modern Indian gurus, like Sri Aurobindo, have written on social issues. Of course, the role of Mahatma Gandhi in this respect is well known. Many modern Indian spiritual movements aim at social upliftment, like the recent Swadhyaya movement of Pandurang Shastri Athavale. In fact, the term Dharma in Hindu parlance first refers to the social dharma.

According to Hindu Dharma, Self-knowledge and the yogic approaches to achieve it are eternal and remain largely the same, differing in externalities of name, form and approach from age to age. However, the social dharma is less fixed and is subject more to variations of time, place and culture. Therefore, Hindu Dharma (unlike, for example, Islam and its Sharia law code) does not have a single social dharma or social law for all time or for all cultures. It recognizes the need of different societies to define their social and political

orders and is open to any number of possible social systems. The main issue for Hindu Dharma is that a social order encourages spiritual development and grants religious freedom and freedom of inquiry in all areas of life.

Strangely, these traditional social sciences are not well known to Hindus, much less to those who write about Hinduism. Few people understand that Hinduism projects both a spiritual and social order aimed at spiritual freedom and Self-realization. Hindu social thought is not the rigid authoritarian social order that people usually consider Hinduism to project through the caste system. It is also very different from Islamic or Christian views of the world divided between the believers and the nonbelievers. Hindu thought does not divide the world on the basis of religion into those who are saved and those who are not.

Most people look at Hindu social thought in the stereotyped form of the caste system, not realizing that this does not represent the real tradition at all. Caste by birth is a distortion of an originally more fluid system of social division and derives mainly from the medieval period as a defensive reaction against foreign invasions. The foundation of classical Hindu society is a recognition of individual needs and capacities, defined in spiritual as well as material terms.

Hinduism calls itself Sanatana Dharma, a universal or eternal tradition of dharma or natural law. It seeks both

an individual and a collective order of Dharma harmonizing the human being within the greater universe of consciousness. The highest Dharma in Hinduism is Moksha, which means freedom or liberation of consciousness, not simply of the body. This implies the full development of individual potentials in order to expand one's consciousness from the egoic level to a divine and cosmic realization. To this end all other human pursuits of earning a livelihood, raising a family, career achievement, and creative and cultural advancement have their value, but are not in themselves the ultimate. Without such a transcendent goal to turn these into liberating factors they lead to bondage and become factors of disintegration. After all, these factors deal with the transient and outer aspect of our nature. Only Self-realization has an eternal value. There are four pillars of the Hindu view of society.

1. 1. 1. Family – Jati
2. 2. 2. Class – Varna
3. 3. 3. Individual Dharma – Svadharma
4. 4. 4. Differing Capacities – Adhikara Bheda

The Role of the Family and Tribe

Much is said in the western world today about the family and its decline in modern society. All current western politicians speak of 'family values' often without making clear what exactly they mean either by

the family or by values. Increasing divorce rates in particular are cited as a problem, with broken homes and single parents. The old family model of a two-parent family and a housewife taking care of the children at home has become the exception rather than the rule in the developed world.

Yet it is not surprising that the nuclear family is threatened in the West because the extended family disappeared decades ago. Mobile lifestyles and urban living cut people off from their extended families and turned the nuclear family into an isolated unit. Without the support of an extended family of grandparents, aunts and uncles, the nuclear family cannot sustain itself. It is exposed to social vicissitudes like a person without the shelter of a house.

In Hinduism the concept of family includes not just the nuclear family, but also the extended family and community linked by ties of blood, neighborhood, culture and history. Such greater families are often referred to as 'tribes' in traditional societies. Such larger family/communities care for their own and it is only in their absence that require modern socialized and government run care for the sick and the elderly (which, however, can never provide the same intimacy). Family ties from the nuclear and extended family give strength to society. The nuclear and extended families nourish and support one another. In classical India, different families promoted certain forms of behavior

and culture and preserved various traditions. Family traditions included forms of art, music science and religion. In this way they enriched not only the society, but also aided in the growth of the individuals who could be born into and are nurtured by diverse traditions.

In the West—and as is the trend of modern society everywhere— people are defined primarily as individuals. Each individual must have his or her own rights, job and money, which means that each person is on his or her own and in competition with all other individuals. This is isolating and frightening and breeds stress and loneliness. The result is that in the West today people are mainly living alone and looking at life in terms of their own separate identity. Though there is material affluence and unprecedented personal rights, there is also tremendous emotional unhappiness, personal alienation, and little by way of real culture. Most of the available culture is an entertainment field for individuals, like the movies, in which there is little real personal interaction.

However, new efforts to create family and community are arising to fill the void in human identity created by the breakdown of the family system and resultant social and psychological problems. Even the tribalism and gangs prevalent among the urban youth are an attempt, unconscious and confused though it may be, to give meaning to life through a family or clan identity.

Family ties, however important, of course do have their dangers. One can have a strong family or community of thieves, as in case of the Mafia. Family loyalty can turn into a means of exploiting other individuals or other families. The family good can override that of society and breed social division and chaos.

India today still suffers from this negative side of family, which is responsible for much of the so-called caste problem in the country. People seek the advancement of their own family or tribe at the expense of the society as a whole. Once a politician is elected his concern is not with the social good but with getting money or resources to his own family, tribe or caste, which is usually defined in terms of blood relations. He robs the state or society to further the vested interest of his family or community. His community becomes his vote bank that supports or elects him to further its separate interests at the expense of the greater good of the nation.

This family rule is most notable in India in the Congress party that has dominated the country since independence. Congress has been a dynasty of one family, the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty through Pandit Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi, in which loyalty to the current family head outweighs any real political ideology or social concerns. Strangely, such family and community based parties like Congress or the Samajwadi Party (SP) of Mulayam Singh Yadav boast a

rhetoric of anticastism while they themselves are promoting what are mainly only family, tribal or personal advantages!

Class – Varna

All societies are made up of classes, whether clearly defined as in traditional societies or loosely as in modern societies. All societies have their rich and poor, which is the main class division by wealth. But there are other class divisions as well.

The old Hindu idea was of a four-tiered society. First was an intellectual or spiritual class, the so-called Brahmins, the educators who guided the culture and provided its values. Second was the ruling, political or warrior class, the Kshatriyas who protected society from hostile forces. Third was the merchant or commercial class, which included both merchants and farmers, the Vaishyas, who created the wealth on which the society depended. The Vaishyas were the majority class in society (note the term 'vish' from which vaishya derives means 'the people'). It served to support society as a whole and create its resources. Fourth was servant or service oriented groups, the Shudras. They helped the other groups and in turn were cared for by them.

Each class had duties as well as rights. The Brahmins had to practice austerity and poverty, selflessly teaching and guiding the culture. The Kshatriyas had to be willing to fight and die in battle. The Vaishyas had to share their wealth with all the classes. Other subclasses existed like artists, musicians, craftsmen and doctors, which had more specific roles.

The varna system, in fact, reflects an organic order, like modern ecology. Human society is a single organism like the human body, but like the body consists of various limbs and organs that have their special functions necessary for the well-being of the whole. This is the Hindu image of the Brahmin as the head, the Kshatriya as the arms, the Vaishya as the legs and the Shudra as the feet. While this organic model was eventually applied in a rigid manner, overemphasizing one's birth family, the importance of family traditions, which no society can entirely ignore, should not be forgotten either. The varna system originally emphasized guna and karma (Gita IV.13), the quality and action of a person, not simply the social position of the birth family. Individual achievement could lift one beyond ones class. If an individual exhibited qualities of another varna, he could with some extra effort join that class. In time, entire families could rise or fall in class status according to their behavior. While the family one was born into could be a helpful indication of one's probable varna, it was not regarded as final. Note that

even in common parlance in India today the son of a Pandit (panditaputra) means ‘a fool’, showing that we not only are like our parents but can become the opposite!

Social duties were shared in unusual circumstances. For example, if the Kshatriya or noble class was defeated in war, the other classes, even the Brahmins, took up arms, assuming the Kshatriya role to compensate. The varna system was an organic social order devised to support a common social good. It considered individual capacities as well as family and social background.

In addition, the highest goal of Moksha or liberation of the individual required going beyond the varna system, which was thought to be only of a preliminary nature in human development. This created orders of monks, sadhus, yogis and swamis who devoted themselves to spiritual practices and were not bound by the duties of any class or caste. They came from any class but were more commonly from the Brahmins, who were taught to seek liberation and to renounce personal satisfaction as part of the duties of their class.

Though people like to emphasize the role of caste in Hinduism, caste is not all there is to the Hindu view of society. The varna system broke down in India centuries ago. The majority of Brahmins today do not practice traditional Brahmin priestly occupations (and those who do are among the poorest of the poor, like temple priests in South India who earn only as much as a

common street sweeper). They don't live according to the rigid rules of piety and penance of medieval Brahmins, who were little more than monks. Similarly, the majority of Kshatriyas do not follow Kshatriya occupations. Many Shudras in India have achieved wealth as in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In fact, in India as throughout the modern world is dominated by commercialism and most people are following Vaishya values and ways of life.

Class and Caste in Other Societies

Similar social orders existed throughout the ancient and medieval worlds with priestly orders, the nobility, merchants and the common people. Europe had its aristocracy, which was its Kshatriya class, until the early twentieth century and remnants of it still remain. While this aristocracy had its corruption, it did produce a certain refinement and artistic culture that the West still emulates today. This ancient class system has survived longer in India, both for good and for ill, which has preserved an ancient type of culture longer than other countries.

Yet this fourfold class order exists to some extent in modern cultures as well. All cultures have their educational elite of professors, scientists, doctors, artists, priests and ministers. They have their political class of politicians, lawyers, policemen and soldiers. They have their merchant and farmer classes. They

have their servants or service oriented jobs. Such a division is almost inevitable in society based upon the division of labor according to social needs and human capacities.

Modern society has removed more obvious class divisions and inequities. Overt slavery has been abolished, but a clear division of rich and poor remains and in some countries, like America, is increasing again. It has reemerged as a division between rich and poor nations, in which third world countries provide cheap labor and raw material for the affluent nations of the West, just as servants used to provide this for their wealthy employers. Affluent cultures also import their servant classes from poorer countries, like the Mexicans in America, the Turks in Germany or Philippine maids in Singapore.

Family of birth remains an important index of one's class. Most people still tend to follow the class status of their family, though exceptions are more common than in older cultures. Various wealthy or educational elites can be found all over the world. Each class also tends to create its own social group. We can see this in the political circles of Washington DC, in army barracks everywhere, in artistic countercultures, or in rural farm settings.

It is natural for people to create communities based upon common work or vocational interests. It can help enrich society as a whole by allowing people of

common interests to strengthen their particular talents and resources. Such groups provide a field in which individuals can grow. For example, an individual of political temperament will do better if raised or working in a political class environment.

However, class like family, though natural and inevitable, has clear dangers. Class oppression is a well-known theme of recent centuries all over the world through the socialist and communist movements. The division of rich and poor is still perhaps the most cruel and defining aspect of social identity. Though a greater class equality has been created in modern times, class divisions have not and perhaps cannot be eliminated, any more than family divisions can. But they can be made to correspond better with real individual capacities.

Society cannot be one homogenous or gelatinous mass or it cannot stand. Like the human body it must have an organic structure and differentiation, which requires some class divisions. Even communist countries could not abolish class but instead created new classes of bureaucrats, policemen and ideologues, which were just their own modified forms of Vaishya, Kshatriya and Brahmin orders.

At the same time, modern society has no real concept of freedom that transcends social groups and their mundane goals. Modern society emphasizes a social dharma of success, affluence and materialism for

everyone. It is a Vaishya dharma, not a Moksha dharma. Modern freedom is defined mainly in terms of commercial values; freedom to buy or freedom to do what one wants in the outer world. Modern commercial or Vaishya-dominated society appears stunted and incomplete, neither understanding, nor providing for the needs for all the different classes and temperaments of people. Because of its commercial values the gulf between the rich and the poor must continue.

Individual Dharma

In Hindu thought, family and class identities are secondary to the individual and his or her own spiritual capacities. The individual is the real bearer of consciousness and only the individual can achieve Moksha or liberation. The social dharma of mutual duties rests upon the individual dharma of spiritual practice, which it should support and uphold. Ultimately, the individual must renounce society in order to achieve liberation. This is the basis of the many monastic and sadhu orders of Hinduism that require renunciation of all social status in order to join.
The main principle of individual dharma in Hinduism is Svadharma; one should follow one's own dharma in life. The Bhagavad Gita III.35 states: "Better is one's own dharma though imperfectly done, than the dharma

of another well-performed. Better is death in one's own dharma. To pursue the dharma of another carries great fear."

Yet individual and social dharmas are interrelated. Family and community exist to provide a foundation for individual development. They create the field in which the individual can grow. For example, a person may have a good artistic capacity but if he is born into a family that dislikes art or into a cultural setting where no artistic training can be found, that capacity cannot develop.

The modern West emphasizes the material freedom of the individual to pursue desire, not the spiritual freedom of the individual to transcend desire. The western idea is of individual fulfillment and self-realization but only of our outer capacities, not our inner potentials. While this does provide an external freedom that has aided in advancements in science and technology, it has not liberated the spirit of man or brought the growth of a higher consciousness in humanity. Without spiritual freedom it still leaves humanity in the bondage of desire.

Individual Qualifications

Individual Dharma rests upon the capacities of the individual. Different people have different capacities and these also grow and change with time. Svadharma

rests upon Adhikara Bheda (different capacities). We must understand what we are really capable of. Each creature in the world has its capacities. A squirrel cannot compete with a horse in running races, for example, but a horse cannot compete with a squirrel in terms of climbing trees! Yet the main quality or capacity of the human being is to pursue Self-realization. It is not a mere physical, biological or intellectual specialty.
We must also understand what is the highest good for a person. Svadharma means what reflects the dharma or spiritual capacity of a person. It is not Svakama, doing what we like or what affords us the most pleasure in the outer world. Such personal inclinations are not dharma. The West promotes individual freedom and the ability of the person to become what they want. This is usually defined in terms of gaining fame or money in the outer world, which are the prime values of modern commercial culture. These are not dharma or a universal good but merely a transient or personal pleasure. They neither fulfill the individual, nor create a caring social order.
In modern society real individual capacity is often lost sight of. People seek what brings outer achievement and acquisition, not necessarily what reflects their real capacities or brings inner peace and happiness. A person becomes a doctor not necessarily out of love of healing but out of looking for a high paying job. The people who become prominent are not necessary those

who are most capable in their fields but those best able to manipulate the media and create a good marketing strategy for their image, which seldom corresponds to who they really are. Packaging has become the main concern and content continues to decline.

Individual Dharma is not a matter of doing what one likes. Often our likes are mistaken. A person may want to be a great athlete but that may be a fantasy, not a real possibility. He may be better off in some other job. And our material capacities and spiritual capacities vary. We may have a material capacity to make a lot of money but not a spiritual capacity to achieve a higher state of consciousness. We sometimes have to choose between one or the other because our time in life is limited. We are not able to manifest all possibilities for ourselves, just as even a good musician cannot be good at playing all musical instruments.

As individuals we have several capacities and must understand not only what we want to do but also what represents our highest good. The difficulty lies in determining the real capacity of a person. It is much like a student in school. They require some aptitude testing or job training to determine this. Merely what they want may not be enough to show their real place in life. Most people don’t know their real capacities and generally seek something imaginary or inflated for themselves. We must remember the example of the Gita. Krishna urged Arjuna to fight in battle rather than

to renounce the world because Arjuna was a Kshatriya, a warrior, not only by caste but by individual temperament, not a monk or sadhu. The monk role was an escape to avoid the difficult duties that his dharma required.

A Hindu View of Society

In the Hindu view a global or enlightened society must consider these four bases of the social order. Above all a Moksha Dharma or the seeking of spiritual freedom and self-realization must be present for an really enlightened social order to emerge.

Family is necessary, not only the nuclear family, but also the extended family and a greater community or tribe. Class differences are necessary as they fulfill various social needs. However, both family and class groups should promote greater social unity and a common welfare. They should encourage rather than stifle the capacities of individuals even if these deviate from family or class norms. In short, they must remain general, flexible and adaptable, with an orientation to a higher spiritual dharma.

Most important is a society that recognizes individual dharma and individual capacities as the highest goal. The individual has to be free to pursue his or her own dharma according to his or her own capacities. This is to respect the Self, Atman or Divine presence in everyone.

However, in emphasizing the individual, the dharma of the individual must be stressed. Dharma is the unifying factor. The dharma of the individual cannot stand apart from the dharma of the society or the dharma of the universe and implies not only individual capacities but also personal duties as well. We all have our part to play in the universal order, which is an order of giving, sharing and sacrifice (Yajna). That is our Dharma. Our individual dharma is not intended to obstruct the dharma of others but to aid in the unfoldment of all life. Fulfillment of individual dharma and social dharma must go hand in hand. It is the pursuit of desire that is divisive, which is a deviation from the cosmic order of sharing (Yajna).

Modern society is a commercial society. It suppresses spiritual or dharmic capacities in people and instead promotes desire and ego based urges that lead to adharma. Communist society emphasized 'to each according to his needs and from each according to his abilities'. This principle reflects a consideration of individual capacity. Unfortunately, it is defined only in material terms and so could never become a reality.

To foster the real individual or the real person (Atman or Purusha) means to control the desire-based ego. It means to develop the real capacities of people, not merely to inflate their wants, ambition or aggression. It means to help people to discover what they really love to do for its own sake, not to pursue results. Here again

the Gita II. 47 teaches us, saying that our adhikara, our right or capacity is only to do the work, not to seek its results. If you love doing something you are not counting the rewards. You will do it even if there are no rewards.

This dharmic idea of society preserves individual freedom at the deepest level while maintaining duty to the world in our outer behavior. It affords a place for commercial urges without allowing them to dominate our deeper aspirations. It has a place for family and class but one that does not serve to stifle the individual or to fragment society.

Religion in Human Society

Religion, or the seeking to align the human being with the cosmic being, should play a role in creating a proper social order. Religion establishes the sacraments for keeping together the family and the community. Religion defines the priestly class that provides the main educators and value promoters for society. Therefore religion should be the main source of dharma.

The problem with western religions as they have developed historically is that they do not have a proper concept of Svadharma or individual dharma. They have one savior, prophet, book, church or belief for everyone, as if there were no real individual

temperamental differences. Should anyone seek to follow a different or personal approach to the spiritual life they are criticized or punished as unorthodox or heretical.

Such religions try to impose their one belief on all human beings, destroying any individual and cultural achievements and capacities that might get in the way. Their effort to convert the world to a single belief shows their rigidity and their lack of understanding of the diversity of life. This is like trying to get everyone to dress the same, talk the same or walk the same. Certainly we need as much freedom and creativity in praying, meditating and worshipping as we do in other aspects of life. Otherwise we are not really human beings but only automatons.

On the other hand, Hinduism has many Gods, Goddesses, teachers, scriptures, and Yoga practices in order to accommodate the different levels and capacities of individuals. This multiplicity of deities represents how the higher and universal truth can be approached from the various angles of the many human types. It reflects not an abstract or exclusive unity but a creative and flexible unity that moves and changes with life itself.

A dharmic society should rest upon a dharmic approach to religion. This implies an approach that is pluralistic, non-dogmatic, creative, adaptable and alive. Hinduism as Sanatana Dharma, shorn of its unnecessary

accretions, can offer such a dharmic vision. Unfortunately, most Hindus don't understand their tradition and are unable to use it in their own lives, much less share it with others. Some of them are putting a rigidity into Hinduism that ignores this entire foundation of svadharma and self-realization. Others are failing to see the universality of dharma in Hinduism and regarding it as something merely cultural or ethnocentric.

A New Way of Dharma

We are now entering a global, multicultural and multi-religious age. We are moving from the technological age to the age of information, to an eventual age of consciousness. Rigid and exclusive forms can no longer be justified in our social or religious orders. At the same time, we cannot ignore the organic base of life in nature, family and community. The abstract ideological approaches of communism and socialism have failed. Modern commercialism is reaching its limits in global exploitation and ecological devastation. The fulfillment of the individual, the society or the world of nature can no longer be separated from one another. Nor can we define our fulfillment only in economic terms without causing harm both to people and to nature.

For this coming new world-age (yuga), we need a new socio-political-economic order. The models of the past

are either erroneous or out of date. The only real solution is a new culture of dharma, in which individual, social and planetary dharmas have their place and their interdependence is clearly recognized as well. New political systems have to evolve that go beyond the limitations of modern democracy without bringing back old forms of tyranny. A new economic system is required that neither suppresses economic freedom, as in communism, nor makes it the end all of life, as in the current multinational capitalism. Naturally this will require much thinking, planning and new experiments.

We must return to the dharmic roots of human civilization for a new dharmic renaissance. A new society of dharma is required for a new age of dharma. Dharmic thinking must be reintroduced not only in religion but also in science and culture. Dharmic action must be emphasized over any seeking of results or gaining of outer powers. This dharmic approach is not hostile to any truth and can serve to integrate the skill and wisdom in all our human endeavors. The dharmic approach loses nothing that is unique but at the same time does not take away from the totality. A new dharmic inquiry (Dharma Mimamsa) is necessary, including into the roots of the social order. In the Hindu tradition, this will require creating new Smritis and Dharma Shastras. There are lasting solutions to all the problems of life, but these are dharmic solutions. We

must seek such dharmic solutions to our problems and not be content with mere short term profit.

Part II

The Need for a New Indic School of Thought

Part II.1

The Need for a New Indic School of Thought

Background: The Clash of Civilizations

A clash of civilizations is occurring throughout in the world today, a war of cultures at various levels in both our personal and in our public lives. One civilization, the Western-European-American is currently predominant and is strongly, if not rudely, trying to eliminate or subordinate the rest. Yet western civilization is spreading itself not so much by force, as in the colonial era, but by subtle new forms of social manipulation. These include control of the media and news information networks, the entertainment industry and commercial markets, by continued aggressiveness by western religions and—as important but sometimes overlooked—control of educational institutions and curriculums worldwide.

This control of education has resulted in a Western-European-American view of history and culture in textbooks and information sources in most countries, including India. Naturally, people educated according to western values will function as part of western culture, whatever the actual country of their birth. They will experience an alienation from their native culture that they have not really been raised in. They easily become

a fifth column for the westernization of their culture, which usually means its denigration or, at best, its commercialization. For this reason, an authentic Indian or Indic perspective—a worldview coming out of the culture of India and its particular values and perceptions—is hardly to be found, even in India. The western school of thought is taught in India, not any Indic school of thought.

What is the Indic school of thought, one might ask? Does it exist at all? It is not at all something new or unknown. It is the great spiritual, philosophical, scientific, artistic and cultural traditions of the subcontinent that are among the largest and oldest in the world. The Indic school of thought is an emphasis on dharma, karma, pluralism and synthesis, on Yoga sadhana and moksha. It reflects a dharmic worldview, in which all aspects of human and cosmic life are integrated in a vision of the conscious and sacred nature of all existence. The Indic school of thought is not only the tradition of ancient sages from the Vedas and Upanishads to Buddhist and Yoga traditions but also modern teachers like Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda. It is not only the vast literature of Sanskrit but also that of the many regional languages and dialects of the subcontinent, most of which have older literary traditions than the languages of Europe, including English.

All major cultural debates are now framed according to western values and perceptions, and so they will naturally serve to uphold them. The important issues of Indic civilization today are examined according to the principles or biases of the western school of thought. These include what Indian civilization is, when India as a nation first arose, what the real history of India is, how to reform Indian society, and how India should develop in order to have its rightful place in the future world. As the debate is defined according to the approach and values of western civilization, India does not always fare well, and India as its own independent source of civilization is seldom acknowledged. India is judged as if it should be like another USA, Britain or Germany, which it can never be, nor should be. This only makes Indians feel inferior or wrong, like a square peg in a round hole.

The western school of thought has denigrated or overlooked the Indic school, even in the Indian context. For example, the Indic school has its own history sources through the Vedas, Puranas and various historical texts (Itihasas) that are quite massive and detailed, with much internal consistency, but in writing the history of India, the western school does not give these any real place at all. They are dismissed as at best mythology and at worst fraud. Instead, the West defines the history of India according to outside influences, as a series of invasions and borrowings

mainly from the west—from cultures the West knows better and has more affinity with. This makes India seem dependent upon the West in order to advance its civilization again today.

The western school of thought misses the relevance of the traditions of India, almost as if they were not even there. This is not simply because the Indic tradition is wrong, unsophisticated or irrelevant. It is because western civilization is hegemonic, if not predatory in nature, and such ideas help promote its spread. Its information about India contains a built in poison. It is meant to undermine the culture of the region and subordinate it to the West, however objective, scientific or modern its approach may appear to be.

Western Distortions and the Indian Response

When India as a nation arose is defined by the western school as 1947, the year of modern India's independence. It founders were Nehru and Gandhi, who inherited a united region from the British, before which India was just a confused mass of local kingdoms with no national consistency. Even today, the western school of thought prefers to call the subcontinent of India as 'South Asia', undermining any idea of cultural continuity more than a vague geography. On the other hand, according to the Indic school, India or Bharat as a country arose in the Vedic era as the type of

dharmic/yogic culture that has been the main characteristic of Indian civilization throughout history. This spiritual or yogic orientation can be found in all regions of India from Tamil Nadu to the Himalayas, pervading even the folk art and folksongs.

In the western school of thought, an Aryan invasion or migration is used to explain how ancient Vedic civilization took root in India, as if it were an alien force of intruding barbarians with little sophistication, much less spirituality. In the Indic school of thought, the whole idea of an Aryan Invasion/Migration doesn't exist. The Indic tradition arose from the rishi tradition of the indigenous Vedic-Sarasvati culture and related cultures, reflected in the continuity of Vedic literature from the Vedas to the Mahabharata, Buddhist and Jain literature, and the Puranas, which reflect the same geography, cosmology, peoples and dynasties of kings.

In these current cultural encounters, therefore, an overriding greater issue is ignored—the more primary debate between the western and the Indic schools of thought. The western style media and academia judges Indic civilization and finds it to be wanting, reducing it to little more than caste or superstition. This is not surprising as the Indic tradition has a different focus and different values than the western tradition. Similarly, from the standpoint of the Indic tradition, we must question the very basis of western civilization itself. Is the western school of thought enlightened and

reflect higher values beyond purely transient human desires? Is its idea of civilization appropriate for India, the land of the great rishis and yogis? Can its outward oriented mindset understand the unique civilization of the subcontinent?

The Indic school itself can be highly critical of the western school. For example, when asked what he thought about western civilization, Mahatma Gandhi replied, "It would be a good idea." What he meant was that from the standpoint of the spiritual traditions of India, western civilization with its materialism, aggression and dogmatism was not highly evolved. Sri Aurobindo, who himself wrote excellent English poetry, similarly highlighted the limitations of western civilization and especially the decline of its culture in the twentieth century commercial age.

'Secular Missionaries'

The West sets forth its values (meaning its political and economic system) as universal and then tries to police them throughout the world, rewarding countries that emulate the West and punishing those who go their own way. It tries to control any debate on cultural ethics or right and wrong in the world under slogans of democracy and human rights. Yet, revealing the commercial nature of western civilization, this assertion

of human rights is mainly used to intimidate weak nations and conveniently ignored relative to stronger or wealthier nations like China or Saudi Arabia.

Though there are many genuinely idealist groups that use the protection of human rights and saving the Earth to promote peace and reduce exploitation in the world, many other groups use the cover of human rights to interfere with, if not destroy non-western cultures. Organizations operating under the cover of human rights are among the most alienating influences in traditional cultures today. They function like 'secular missionaries', ignoring victims of terrorism like the Hindus, while defending the 'rights' of terrorist organizations against security forces that are forced to take action against them.

In spite of its claim to represent human rights, the West is the main seller of weapons of mass destruction and profits from terrorism and civil strife throughout the world, which it often ignores, if not promotes. The global arms business is one of the largest for western economies including the United States, France and Great Britain. Most of the terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan—the main terrorist state in the world today—including the notorious Osama Bin Laden, were originally trained by the CIA. Without there having already been a decade or more of US patronage there would probably be no such Afghani state today. Note also how the West turned its back on the genocide in

Rwanda several years ago, letting a million people die in civil strife. Members of the Catholic church were involved and convicted in this massacre. So much for the protective effect of western governments and churches or their assertion of human rights when it doesn't suit them!

Western religious groups similarly use the cover of human rights to promote missionary activities and conversion efforts. They like to appear to be promoting western secular, social and political values, uplifting the undeveloped world, while actually continuing the religious exclusivism, aggression and intolerance of the colonial era. Western-funded hospitals and schools overseas bring in political, economic or cultural influences, using charitable institutions for social agendas, just as western missionaries use them to further conversion efforts.

Western human rights groups highlight social inequalities in non-western countries like India, while ignoring the colonial history of both genocide and cultural destruction. The same charges of cultural backwardness were used throughout the colonial era to undermine the native traditions of Africa, Asia and America, and justify religious conversion and political domination, which is probably their real aim.

These secular missionaries promote the new religion of western secular humanism, which like older exclusivist ideologies of Christianity or communism is similarly

used to destroy other religious and cultural systems. Their judgement of others as not being 'politically correct' is as damning and judgmental as the Christian charge of heresy or paganism. Secular missionaries go into traditional cultures with an almost fanatical zeal to reform them as colonial missionaries, blind to the values of traditional customs and condescending in their attitudes. They disrupt traditional family systems, local economies and connections to the natural environment. What they do is not much different from what Christian missionaries did to native American and African societies, leaving them rootless and promoting conflict within them.

The need for self-determination for religious and ethnic minorities within different countries has also been used by the West to divide larger nations into smaller countries that are less threatening politically or economically. How such tiny states, like those in the Balkans or East Timor with populations less than a few million people, can function is ignored. Had such a right of self-determination existed in the nineteenth century, countries like the United States would have been quickly fragmented into many small states. The United States does not feel a need to be divided into black, white and Hispanic nations, or into Protestant, Catholic, Jewish or Islamic nations, in order to achieve cultural coherence. Why should it require this of other countries? While religious and ethnic minorities do

sometimes need protection (other times they can harbor anti-national subversives), this can be done without the dissolution of the state or no large nation will be able to preserve its boundaries.

At the same time, certain groups have learned to manipulate the western demand for human rights and self-determination to their own advantage. For example, various Islamic groups, whose real purpose is to create a traditional Islamic religious state, have used the cover of seeking self-determination and the protection of their human rights to gain sympathy from the West, even though they would never create a secular state if they came to power. The Palestinian uprising against Israel is often portrayed in the western media as an issue of self-determination and democracy. Really it is a religious war with Palestinians defining themselves not by nationhood but by religion, and by a religion that is authoritarian and exclusive in the medieval sense, not democratic or secular in the modern sense.

Sometimes native intellectuals are taken in by western approaches to social issues, not realizing that they are promoting the colonial agenda of world domination in a covert form. Native intellectuals have been particularly vulnerable to communism, an alternative western ideology, embracing it to end colonial exploitation while really continuing the westernization of their cultures through it. Chinese communists, for example,

did more damage to their own culture than did the colonial powers when they ruled China. Communism was the worst form of colonialism or western destructive of native cultures. Similarly, leftist intellectuals in countries like India, though often spouting an anti-western or anti-American rhetoric, are vociferously working to undermine their own traditional cultures in favor of what just another form of western cultural domination. They are rootless and alienated from their own culture, which they treat with hostility and contempt as much as any British magistrate would during the colonial era.

New Rules of Debate

Therefore, it is not enough to debate issues of culture, politics, or history in the existing forums in order to promote an Indian or Hindu view. We must question the very process itself—the perspective and values behind the school of thought in which this debate occurs. What India needs is a new Indic school of thought that is dynamic and assertive in the modern global context, that can challenge western civilization not merely in regard to the details of history or culture, but relative to fundamental principles of life, humanity and consciousness. This requires a renaissance in the Indic tradition and its great spiritual systems of Yoga, Vedanta, Buddhism and Jainism, and also in its political,

artistic and scientific approaches. Modern science and technology can arguably be more humanely employed according to Indic or dharmic values, than according to western religious exclusivism or commercial greed.

The world needs a critique of civilization from an Indic or dharmic perspective, a view on capitalism, socialism, communism, Christianity and Islam from a tradition that is older, deeper and closer to the spirit in both man and nature. These western ideologies are failing to address the spiritual needs of humanity and are incapable of creating a world order that transcends dogmatism or exclusivism.

Those who are part of the Indic school of thought should emphasize this greater debate and not get caught in the details of issues already formulated according to the biases of western civilization. This debate should examine the right structure for society and the real forward direction for history and evolution. We must raise fundamental questions. Is the current western materialistic view of history valid at all, or are there spiritual forces at work in the world that go beyond these? Can we understand our history through outer approaches like archaeology, linguistics or genetics, which remain physically based and tied to an outer view of the world, or is a higher consciousness and spiritual view required as well? Are the records of the ancient sages to be rejected so lightly, whenever we think they don't agree with our views, or do they

contain keys to higher knowledge that we have missed in our arrogance?
The real issue of the Vedas, India's oldest tradition, is not how these texts might fit into the current model of history as promoted by the western school of thought, tracing the development of civilization through material advances. It is how the existence of such an ancient tradition of rishis, knowers of cosmic consciousness, shows a higher spiritual humanity from which we have arisen and whose legacy we can yet reclaim.

A New Indology

A new Indology is needed rooted in the Indic tradition and in Indic, that is dharmic values. Such an Indology would honor the spiritual and yogic roots of Indic culture. It would respect traditional accounts of history as helpful. It would look to traditional teachers both ancient and modern as authentic sources. Certainly, it would make adjustments to the times and not be tied to any dogma from the past, but it would carry the stream of Indic civilization forward, not look for another stream to take its place.
Western Indology is rooted in western values and an inherent Eurocentric cultural view, which is materialistic in orientation and spiritually naive. It is not possible to appreciate Indic civilization from such limited values, even though these may be slowly

widening. In fact, to truly widen Western Indology requires exposing its limitations. India needs a new Indology rooted in an Indic School of thought, not in a Marxist, Christian, Capitalist or Islamic schools, which have their own points of view and cannot and will not speak positively of the Indic tradition.

Western academia is a product of rajoguna, the quality of aggression, and emphasizes outer values that easily fall into cultural biases. It promotes the ego of professors over any greater spiritual tradition. Its motivation is essentially political and still hides an inner imperialism. It has no real sense of Atman or Brahman or any higher reality. Indic culture on the other hand promotes sattvaguna or the culture of peace. It recognizes the value of an enduring spiritual tradition and many ancient sages over the egos of the latest generation of scholars. It is the Atman and Brahman that it honors, not the person or the institution. Its basis is not the current political correctness but Sanatana Dharma.

A New School of Thought

India needs a different type of scholarship, an Indic school of thought that has its own values, traditions and conclusions. Those who follow Indian civilization should develop this Indic school in its own right, and not merely try to justify our views in terms of the

current western or European school of thought, which has a hostile and alien foundation and history. Presently, the Indic school of thought has been battered by outside forces and is in disarray. Its institutions were largely undermined by the nineteenth century. Though it is arising again in recent years, its forces require integration and a comprehensive articulation. The Indic tradition needs to reformulate and expand itself in the global context, as well as reclaiming its place as the dominant intellectual and spiritual force of South Asia.

I recently raised a call for an intellectual kshatriya in India—a new class of warrior intellectuals to defend India and its great pluralistic traditions from the onslaught of western exclusivist approaches, whether religious, economic or political[3]. This call requires the creation of such a new Indic school of thought. Such a new Indic school of thought would consist not just of philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta, but also Indic, Hindu and Dharmic approaches to ecology, the global marketplace, health, science, the status of women and religious freedom; in short to all the main issues in society today. But it should also look beyond these issues—which are often more the issues of the western school—to yet broader concerns. How can we integrate humanity with nature and its underlying cosmic

[3] In my book Awaken Bharata

intelligence? How can we reclaim our spiritual heritage as a species that the great yogis have pointed out for us?

New Kinds of Institutions

A new Indic school of thought requires new institutions to embody it, new Vedic schools of all types. These will arise not through Indology departments in western styled universities but through a new type of institution with its own funding and curriculum, free from manipulation by the vested interested and ideologies of the western school.

The problem is that academic institutions, not only the West but also in India, were created by the western school and reflect its values. It is not possible to transform western institutions into the appropriate forums for the new Indology. They are part of their culture and mindset and its inherent limitations. Nor is it possible to turn westernized institutions in India into such forums either. They are largely painful imitations of their counterparts in the West and have even a more myopic vision.

To gain credibility for the Indic thought in the context of European-based institutions, like some Hindus are attempting, has inherent limitations that must be recognized before committing resources that could be

better used elsewhere. For example, currently overseas Indians are seeking validity within the western school of thought by funding Indic studies or chairs in western academia. This can be of value in getting an Indic point of view across in western institutions and influencing the western media. However, attempting to give the Indic school of thought a niche in western academia can only be a sidelight and should not be a substitute for creating our own institutions. The Indic school is much vaster than the western school and is based on different principles. Ultimately, the western school will find a place within the Indic school, which is better suited to accommodate different cultural views.

Western universities have their own agendas that they will not readily give up, particularly in the humanities (they are more open-minded in the field of science). They will not change simply because a few well intentioned groups give them money and sponsor positions to project a more 'sympathetic' picture of India and her civilization. Like a sea that salts every river that flows into it, existing trends and interests will force the people coming into them to conform to the dominant Eurocentric values that pervade these institutions. Otherwise, they cannot survive academically. This at least is bound to be the case for some years to come.

For this reason, we need to promote the Indic tradition as a complete school of thought in itself, not as a mere

side subject of Indology in the current western defined academia. We must look back to such Indic models of educational institutions like Naimisha, Takshashila, Nalanda or Mithila, and also to the gurukula approach and its more intimate and spiritual form of learning. The Indic school emphasizes teacher to student instruction and dialogue over mass oriented classes with standardized curriculums. It aims at the development of character and consciousness over the mere passing on of information and technique.

New institutions following older Vedic and Sanskritic models are necessary. These will include ritual, mantra, Yoga and meditation as part of their training. They will be based on a sense of reverence and receptivity to the teachings as tools of self-development. Without such a basis in spiritual practices Vedic teachings cannot be understood. Such institutions are best founded in India where it is closer to the tradition, but can also be founded in the West, if the right people are involved.

I urge the young people and the scholars of India to take up this cause. Do not try to define India in the context of modern civilization as defined by the West. Look directly to the great traditions of India and use them to critique western civilization and discover its limitations. Rather than seeking to define and control India according to western perspectives, the West should look to India for guidance on the deeper issues of culture and spirituality. Indians in turn should assert

their own great heritage and not simply imitate the West or seek to justify Indic civilization from a western perspective.

Solutions to Modern Problems in the Indic School

There are many complex and difficult problems in India today that urgently need to be addressed, including overpopulation, lack of education, poverty, caste and social inequality. The western school of thought likes to blame these on the Indic tradition as a whole. Meanwhile, it presents itself as the answer to India's problems, as if these could all be solved by something from the West, whether economic liberalization, Marxism, Christianity or whatever branch of the western school the particular writer may follow.

While the existence of such problems is not disputable, where to find the answers to them is. It is my contention here that the solutions for India's problems today can be found within the Indic tradition itself, and a right application of its many branches both spiritual and mundane. India needs to release its native intelligence in order to solve its national problems, not resort to an alien mindset not rooted in the land, the people or the culture. In fact, India's current problems are caused by a decline of the Indic tradition over the past thousand years, not by fundamental errors within it. To solve them requires a deeper examination of the

Indic tradition, which includes right social relations, right use of economic resources, and respect for the natural environment.

If groups or nations sincerely want to help India solve its problems—rather than profit from them—they would welcome and provide space for such 'indigenous solutions' and not try to use India's weaknesses to their advantage. Instead they try to divide Indian society and use the conflict they create to promote their own agenda of conversion or domination, overt or covert, blaming the Indic tradition for the very problems that they are aggravating.

The causes of modern India's problems cannot simply be blamed on the Indic tradition or a correct understanding of its teachings. Caste problems in India are a medieval distortion of the Vedic varna system, not its true intent which was merely a social division of labor that was quite fluid. Caste issues have been aggravated by a political emphasis on minority vote banks, which highlights caste identity as a means of political power and financial reward. Economic problems in India are the result of the socialist-Soviet style economy and bureaucracy created by Nehru, nothing traditionally Hindu. India up to a few years ago was run by graduates of the London School of Economics and its socialist policies. There has been little Hindu about modern India's economic policy, but the same state socialism that failed in Eastern Europe

and Russia, which in fact failed everywhere it was applied.
Indian intellectuals should embark on a new seeking of indigenous solutions to modern problems in the country, calling up the national genius and native Shakti of the region. India need not look to the West for the keys to revive its civilization, though western ideas can be helpful, particularly in the context of an Indian vision. Only by reclaiming its own cultural mentality and spirituality can the country really go forward. True scholars of the Indic tradition need not go to Harvard, Oxford or Heidelberg to gain credibility or expertise in their own traditions. That is little more than seeking to pander to the tastes of the old colonial masters, which is not about to end servility or restore one’s pride!

India should once more seek to lead and guide the world from its dharmic foundations.
Not only the solutions to India’s problems but the solutions to the world’s problems can be found in the Indic tradition. The problems of religious violence, consumerist greed, environmental disruption or the decline of the social order can be found in the Vedic vision of the Self in nature and the entire universe in the Self. The only lasting solutions to human problems are dharmic solutions. Hinduism can offer dharmic solutions to all our personal and social problems from

physical and mental disease, to personal and collective relationship problems, to the right use of technology.

Such a revival of India, its culture and its dharmic school of thought need not be feared by anyone. It will enrich the world spiritually, as it has already done so by the spread of Yoga and Vedanta over the past few decades. It does not threaten any other culture or seek hegemony, but is simply trying to link up human civilization with our deepest aspiration to know the eternal and the infinite. The world should welcome and honor a revitalized India as a step for restoring humanity to its spiritual roots.

Part II.2

New Western and Global Dharmic Schools of Thought

The Western School of Thought in Crisis

The current western school of thought operative behind the spread of western culture today is actually more a school of non-thinking, not really a school of thought at all (just as the modern monoculture is no real culture at all). Its basis is commercialization, standardization, mass production and media stereotypes. It is mainly a school of advertising and marketing or of projecting political slogans. Just as the modern monoculture destroys other cultures, so too the current western school of thought destroys other schools of thought, which become at most footnotes within it.

Western culture today contains little deep thinking or seeking to get to the reality that transcends appearances, except in the counterculture and alternative thinkers that look to other civilizational models. The prevalent western school is a practical or business school aimed at getting results, which means accumulating money and winning the masses to a western way of life or, at best, improving the world through technology.

The western intellectual culture of Europe that developed from the Renaissance and flourished through the nineteenth century is almost dead today. European traditions of classical music, art, literature and philosophy were the first victims of the commercial monoculture that arose in the West. Their creative roots dried up. Their productions became commercialized. They remain more as museum pieces or as performance extravaganzas to encourage another level of spending. Classical Indian music and dance on the other hand are more popular than ever.

Western academia today similarly lacks deep thinking or spiritual insight. It falls into several characteristic traps. The first is justifying western commercial culture because of its technological advances, particularly in the field of medicine. The second is promoting a simplistic ideology of political correctness and human rights (often ignoring the rights of cultures), generally of a leftist nature. The third is developing an apologetic for western monotheism or trying to reform it in a modern light, without correcting its fundamental errors or being open to other religious models. The fourth is following the latest trend in science, creating an intellectual rationale for it, with philosophy tagging along behind science with no real vision of its own.

However, we should note that few people in the West directly follow academia, including relative to eastern traditions. Most westerners that study eastern

traditions follow popular trends of Yoga, meditation and spirituality. In fact, western academia has little relevance to the West as a guiding school of thought. The guidance for the western civilization today comes more from Wall Street or the Pentagon than from Harvard or Yale (which function not to guide but rather to excuse or apologize for such military or business groups). Humanities departments in western universities are disappearing and universities are now mainly schools of either science or business.

For all the books, computers and universities in the West, there seems to be little creative thinking or deep spiritual inquiry going on, except among those who are looking to the East. At present we see few great thinkers on the horizon in the West, in spite of the flood of new information technologies. The progress in quantity in the West appears to have destroyed quality in culture as well. America as the world's sole superpower does not reflect any real vision in its intellectual elite relative to humanity, the future, or a higher age of consciousness. The country seems more concerned with enjoying and sustaining power for its own benefit, rather than using it to advance the planet. The American government has been at the rear, not at the forefront of ecology, pollution control and arms control, though it likes to use the charge of human rights violations against its enemies. Similarly, American leaders no longer lead, but follow the public with the

help of opinion polls and other devices that tell them what the public wants to hear. This is one of the down sides of Western democracy.

Deeper Currents in Western Civilization

However, deeper currents do exist within western civilization with affinities to the Indic school of thought and an orientation to Dharma or cosmic law. Some of these currents are very ancient, like the mystical impulses of the older Celtic and Greek traditions and their Druidic, bardic, Orphic and philosophical trends. Others are more recent and reflect the influence of the East through Theosophy, Vedanta, Yoga, Buddhism and Taoism, or the influence other native traditions like the Native American and Shamanism.

Within the European intellectual tradition are dharmic trends, though these remain generally scattered and broken without a yogic methodology to develop a higher consciousness. One can cite the nineteenth century Romantic era, whether mystical German philosophers or mystical English poets, with their emphasis on nature and a connection to the East, particularly India. Another example is the Existentialists of the early twentieth century with their examination of the workings of consciousness and perception. Recent physics with its search for a universal field of consciousness is yet another such trend.

In western mysticism has been a kind of hidden Vedanta, which resurfaced to some degree among European philosophers in the nineteenth century, and occurred in Greco-Roman thought through Parmenides, Plato and Plotinus. In Christianity were figures like Meister Eckhart, who had a Vedantic like philosophy out of place with the medieval church, or St. Francis, who had an approach of non-violence quite apart from Christian crusading. Some Sufis, like Rumi, also reflected Vedantic like ideas. But these were seldom part of orthodox traditions. We seldom find in them a full articulation of the greater Vedantic teaching of karma, dharma, Samsara and Nirvana. In the new era of global communication, people are beginning to discover that such mysticism is more common in eastern traditions and are no longer seeking it through western religions, which have been generally hostile to it anyway.

Behind Christianity itself is also a hidden form of Goddess worship, carrying on old Pre-Christian ways more in harmony both with nature and the spirit. Europeans in the Middle Ages worshipped the Virgin Mary as the great Mother Goddess, though according to the church she was actually only the 'mother of Jesus', not the Divine Mother, and was a minor figure in the Gospels. It was this devotion to the Divine Mother, manipulated by the church through the image of Mary, which gave beauty, depth and compassion to European

culture. Now that the rule of the church is over, people are discovering the Goddess directly apart from any church control or limitation. It may lead also to a revival of the ancient Gnostic tradition, which was driven out of early Christianity

Stirrings of a New Western School of Thought

One could argue that a new western school of thought is struggling to emerge from the current culture, relying on traditional teachings both eastern and western, as well as cultivating a futuristic planetary vision. Through the earth wisdom of native traditions and the yogic spirituality of Asia, the western mind is beginning to undergo a slow metamorphosis. New ideas and insights, a seeking of consciousness and universality, are arising, with a turning away from any mere material, personal or outer definition of reality.

Perhaps the most obvious sing of this is ecological thinking which, since the collapse of communism, has emerged as perhaps the main idealistic movement in the West. It is seeking to restore the organic order of unity and diversity such as is the basis of Hindu thought, emphasizing consciousness even in animals and plants. This incipient western school sees a life-force and consciousness behind nature, an intimation of the Hindu perception of the great Gods and Goddesses of the cosmic mind. It recognizes a need to

reintegrate society into the cosmic order and the rhythms of the natural world. It regards human beings as stewards of nature, not owners of capital. Many individuals within it are vegetarians, practice ahimsa, follow natural forms of healing and meditate regularly. Some are connected to eastern gurus or enlightenment traditions. Some are independent and draw on a variety of sources. New Buddhist thinkers in the West are emphasizing the concept of Dharma, though their understanding of the term is mainly in terms of Buddha Dharma and its psychological/humanistic orientation.

The dominant influence from India on western thought over the last century has been the Western Yoga movement. However, while beginning with a Vedantic orientation and a seeking of Self-realization with teachers like Vivekananda and Yogananda, it has moved away from its spiritual roots, following more popular and commercial physical trends. The Yoga movement in the West has failed to produce much by way of deep thinking. It has mainly become a body-based exercise system that is generally anti-intellectual. As in the case with many Indians, when there is spirituality, disciples think that it is enough to imitate the guru and repeat what he has said rather than think for themselves and produce something original and insightful.

The Western Yoga movement has added new insight in healing and medicine, including care of the dying (the hospice movement), but has produced little by way of

real philosophy or useful critiques of knowledge or of civilization. At best, western Yoga students have done good practices to achieve a higher state of consciousness for themselves or helped others relieve personal suffering. They have not examined the issues of culture or sought a broader impact upon society, much less tried to create models of a new intellectual or cultural order.

A neo-Advaita movement has come up in the West under the influence of such teachings as Ramana Maharshi or J. Krishnamurti. It can sound spiritually sophisticated on a verbal level, but lacks the depth of true realization. Its main concern is individual enlightenment and the glorification of new guru personalities, not any global thinking or dharmic orientation to life and society. Such new gurus are often westerners who, with a quick enlightenment experience, think that they are ready to enlighten others and cultivate their own followings apart from any tradition. People in this movement are often anti-intellectual and seldom understand the Vedantic tradition behind such great sages as Ramana.

The Western Buddhist movement has created a number of interesting thinkers and many new books, with Buddhist approaches to ecology, psychology and feminism that can have some depth. This is largely owing to the work of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans. However, the new Buddhism often falls into the same

traps as the Yoga movement of commercialism, personality worship and a catering to western cultural values and appearances. Some neo-Buddhist thinkers, like many modern Yoga teachers are trying to create a politically correct form of Buddhism, turning it into a form of rational humanism in order to make it more appealing to the West, losing much of the real tradition along the way. Such efforts are more like a new American marketing, not the creation of a real dharmic school of thought in the West. A dichotomy between traditional and modern western views exists in Buddhism as it does in the Yoga tradition.

Western Buddhists are seldom aware of or look into the Indic roots of Buddhism and the greater dharmic tradition that Buddhism is part of. They don't emphasize that Buddhism defined itself as an Indian or Bharatiya tradition, calling itself 'Arya Dharma', 'Sanatana Dharma', 'Saddharma' or other terms shared by the Hindu tradition, as well as using many common symbols (like the swastika). They forget that the terminology of Buddhism they admire like karma, dharma, nirvana and samsara is common to the Indian tradition as whole and not unique to Buddhism, which only has its spin on a common dharmic heritage. They could benefit from a broader examination of the Indic tradition and the place of Buddhism within it. They don't realize that the Hindu tradition is a dharmic ally,

though there may be philosophical differences between the two traditions as there are within each.

In addition to these groups are certain independent or synthetic thinkers. Westerners like to mix and match spiritual teachings until they get a combination that they find suitable. Generally, westerners like eastern teachings but don't want to follow any of these in a strict manner as they are against authority and don't like discipline. They try to put together what they think is the best in eastern traditions or develop their own system out them, a new western approach. Some of these efforts are a western intellectualization of eastern traditions, which the western mind, in its cultural arrogance, can't quite subordinate itself to, but other times they produce important new insights. Such trends are useful in a long term bridging of East and West. They may not have yet produced western thinkers or traditions of the same stature as those of the East, though they may do so over time (and if such thinkers do exist, they may not be known or popular).

Lack of Knowledge about India

It is surprising how uninformed or misinformed the western mind is, even in its occasional spiritual openness and how little of Asian traditions, particularly Hinduism, it has understood, examines or even bothers to read. Living in America and contacting many people

in the Yoga and Buddhists movements, I have met only a few scattered individuals who possess real knowledge of the social and religious movements in India over the last century, much less the Vedic background of Indic civilization. Apart from knowing the names of a few great Indian gurus like Ramana Maharshi or Sri Aurobindo, they have little understanding or recognition of the Hindu mind and its concerns. Few are aware of the broader cultural and intellectual foundation of the Hindu tradition. Almost none know of the Hindu traditions of Dharma Shastras and the perennial Hindu urge to create a dharmic society.

Most eastern spiritual movements in the West are concerned mainly with their own particular following and that of their guru. They want to avoid anything that might be offensive in the eyes of mainstream American culture or prevent non-Hindus from joining them. They distance themselves from Hinduism so as not to have to deal with the distortions about Hinduism that are still common in the West and might prejudice people against them. Naturally, this does little to remove such distortions or to help improve the image of the very tradition that they are benefiting from! For this reason, some Hindus find the western adaptation of their teachings to be self-serving and ungrateful.

Whatever knowledge western Yoga teachers have about India is usually what they have heard from the western media, which they naively accept as true,

though they don’t trust the media in other areas. Those who are truly knowledgeable are generally only those who have lived and worked in India for some time, but most of them either haven’t made any effort or don’t have the means to articulate their knowledge.

In fact, many people in the West who claim to represent or teach eastern spiritual traditions are not well educated in their own traditions. They seldom read books, particularly of a traditional nature. They are not aware of India as a cultural and civilizational entity and its concerns. Their lack of knowledge of Sanskrit and regional dialects in India removes most western students from direct contact with the tradition and limits them to second hand sources that are often incorrect or, at best, keep them confined to the literature of their own lineage.

The Neopagan Movement

The neo-pagan movement is an important movement within western culture that contains the basis of a genuinely native western spiritual or dharmic school. It has two main branches. The first and perhaps largest consists of pre-Christian Celtic, Greek, Roman, Germanic and Slavic traditions from Europe—an Indo-European tradition that can easily be linked by common language and culture to India and to the Vedas. The second consists of a revival of pre-Christian and pre-

Judaic traditions of Egypt and Mesopotamia, which have a similar temple worship and a long standing trade with India. Both branches have strong mystical traditions and a worship of the Goddess, as well as a supreme Deity like Hindu Shiva, the lord of the Yogis. In fact, it could be argued that unless the West rediscovers its own native spirituality that its spiritual awakening will remain incomplete, if not inauthentic.

Several scholars within this movement have studied eastern teachings, particularly the Hindu tradition as the oldest and best preserved pagan tradition in the world. Though few in numbers, they provide an excellent forum for dialogue. In addition there are many teachings and artifacts from these ancient traditions that remain and can be the basis for new modern teachings. A new scholarship is needed to handle this East-West convergence of ancient traditions.

In fact, the western New Age movement, with its embracing of many Gods and Goddesses, sages, spiritual paths and healing traditions, looks a lot like a new western Hinduism developing. Hinduism alone of the world’s major religions has a comparable complexity and diversity that can really encompass all spiritual teachings without their diminution.

A World School of Dharma

It may be wrong to expect too much of the West, particularly America which is a young country, in terms of leading the world spiritually, intellectually or culturally, particularly in its mainstream forces. What America has to offer that is really transformative is through its counterculture that is allied to native and eastern traditions. Any real spiritual awakening in the world is likely to come primarily through Asia, though it will be felt worldwide. India will likely be the first country to really manifest this, with a movement in this direction that is already over a century old and now pushing forward in a dynamic way. China will probably follow in a few decades, when it adds a resurgent Chinese Buddhist and Taoist culture to its genuine nationalism that is presently distorted by the hangover of communism. Eventually, Iran will return to its pre-Islamic traditions that have been its real strength through the centuries. Then we will see a new spiritual age for humanity with these three perennial civilizations active once more on their higher levels. The nexus of these three countries could create a real new dharmic order for the world.

Europe will probably be more significant in global spiritual awakening than America. A Celtic revival in Britain or a reawakening of mystical traditions in Russia linked to the East may prove important. One should note that India is a much more important country for Britain or Russia than for the United States, which for

Asia will focus on China. Awakenings in native traditions in America, Africa and Asia will prove crucial for a global spiritual rebirth.

Eventually, a new world or planetary school of thought is required, seeking to establish a new sacred order for human life, a kind of neo-Vedanta. It will recognize the higher Self (Atman), the Absolute (Brahman), the Creator (Ishvara), the cosmic mind (Mahat) and Nature (Prakriti). It will accept the entire range of spiritual paths, the Yogas of knowledge, devotion, service and inner practices. At the same time, it will seek to create new intellectual, social and political orders in harmony with the inner knowledge, with new communities, tribes and lineages. This will provide a real foundation for advancing not only human but cosmic civilization on Earth, linking all time and space, this world and all the worlds. This is the universal order of Sanatana Dharma.

Part II.3

The Need for a New Buddhi Shakti (Spiritual Force for the Intellect)

The Means of Knowledge and Cultural Biases

What is the nature of the intellect? What is the operation of real intelligence? What is the proper role of reason? What should we look for in terms of authority for determining real knowledge, whether in the fields of science, history or spirituality? What are the principles and methodologies that can lead us to a direct perception of truth? Certainly all thinkers, East and West, must grapple with these ideas before coming to conclusions about anything.

Unless we first know our means of knowledge—unless we understand the instrumentality with which we seek to know—how can we be certain of anything that we claim to discover? Therefore, the inquiry into the means of knowledge must precede any inquiry into the objects to be known. However, today we have taken for granted that our present cultural means of knowledge as defined by science, technology and the media is accurate, unbiased, comprehensive and capable of yielding the truth—which to a deeper vision is certainly not the case.

Different civilizations possess different ideas about the nature of the intellect and the role of reason. What is rational according to one culture may be irrational or biased according to another. Even western civilization, though largely based on the scientific intellect, still has a place for faith and some scientists still argue in favor of Biblical miracles.

Indic civilization has a long tradition of deep philosophical thinking, in which the role of the intellect is an important topic. Books on Indian philosophies generally begin with an examination of the appropriate means of knowledge (pramanas), as well as whether the student is well enough equipped with it in order to find the truth (adhikaras). These different means of knowledge include not only sensory perception and inference, as in the West, but also higher states of consciousness (Samadhi), not part of western intellectual methods of knowledge. The student's equipment to truly learn includes spiritual practices and ethical disciplines, not just intellectual training.

Nature of Intelligence or Buddhi

According to the Indic tradition, we are all endowed with a faculty of intelligence called buddhi or prajna (dhi in the Vedas). This faculty makes us different from animals, which have a sense consciousness, and the

plants, which have a life-force[4]. It allows us to determine right and wrong, truth and false, the real and the unreal, the good and the bad and enables us to act in a conscious way. Because of this discriminating intelligence we can achieve enlightenment and Self-realization.

Yet intelligence is a two-edged sword. It has a twofold orientation, outer and inner. Reason turned outwardly discriminates between the names and forms of the external world and learns to harness the forces of nature. This is the basis of modern science and technology. Reason turned inwardly discriminates the transient names and forms of external appearance from the eternal inner reality of consciousness and learns to harness of the powers of consciousness. This is the realm of Yoga and Vedanta.

From this orientation of the mind, the Vedic tradition has always recognized two different types or levels of science—the lower or apara vidya (Mundaka Upanishad I.3-4). Unlike western civilization during the Christian era, Indic civilization did not see a dichotomy between religion and science that caused religion to suppress science, though it did afford priority to the higher knowledge. It did not dismiss the lower knowledge as useless but only as secondary.

[4] This is idea is as old as the Aitareya Aranyaka II.3.2

At the same time, India developed methods of turning the lower knowledge into the higher, as the division between the two was more one of attitude than of form. Indian thinkers realized that if one approached even mundane subjects with a spiritual intent, these could reveal a higher truth. By seeing the entire universe as sacred, it regarded even mundane knowledge as a kind of sacred knowledge. For this reason, mathematics and grammar as well as art, music and literature of all types could be turned into a Yoga or way of spiritual practice. A yogic methodology could render the lower knowledge into a form of the higher. The Indic tradition promotes both the outer and the inner, the lower and the higher aspects of the intellect. But it aims at directing the lower aspects of the mind to unfold the higher.

The Indic tradition, therefore, has the means of turning modern science into a means of spiritual knowledge, just as it has done with traditional arts and sciences. This requires not negating science but subordinating the outer science to an inner science of consciousness. In the case of physics, for example, it means not only recognizing consciousness as the basis of the material world but also adopting yogic methods to realize that consciousness in ones own mind.

In the Indic view, human intelligence is a manifestation of universal intelligence. It is not a product of mere social conditioning or physical evolution. The goal of

Indic systems of knowledge is the reintegration of human and cosmic intelligence. For it, the cosmic mind is the repository of all true knowledge and power and the linking of the human mind with the cosmic mind is the way to achieve these. Even the discoveries of great scientists usually occur in inspirational moments in which the cosmic mind touches them. It is not enough for us to develop intellectual cunning, huge computers or large data banks. Unless we can give up our human ego and open to this higher cosmic intelligence our knowledge will remain biased, incomplete and potentially destructive.

Yet if we make this shift of orientation, accepting both the lower and higher forms of knowledge and giving each its appropriate place, all the secrets of the universe and the mind will be opened to us.

The Need for a New Buddhi Shakti

From this Indic understanding came the idea of the spiritualized mind, the mind of truth, the dharmic intellect, or the Self-mind as the true goal of mental culture—not merely intellectual genius in the sense of the western school but a higher consciousness beyond the ordinary mind and ego. Such a yogic mind cannot be produced through mere academic education, training in reason or performing experiments in laboratories. Outwardly, it requires a certain life-style

or discipline to render the mind sensitive and alert, with certain physical disciplines because the tradition recognized the interrelationship of the mind and body.

The foundation of mental discipline in India was the practice of ahimsa or non-violence and other mental virtues of patience, detachment, compassion and devotion. This was allied with a vegetarian diet and control of the senses to eliminate external factors that disturb and weigh down the mind. The mind was trained through exercises in concentration, mantra and meditation to develop an inner and unmediated perception. Pranayama was used to give more energy to the mind and aid in its introversion. Such an intelligence was trained to be non-egoistic in nature, transcending body consciousness. There was little emphasis on the personality or name of the teacher, the teaching and tradition was the main thing. The culture so created is inner based and does not look at the external world or to external goals of personal or social achievement as the true reality. It seeks liberation from the material world or enlightenment as its highest goal.

The West, on the other hand, has emphasized the outward training of the intellect through mathematical, technical and verbal skills. It puts little emphasis on any spiritual or ethical discipline for the mind. It has no organized system of yogic practices to systematically develop a higher awareness (though great thinkers may

discover some of these). The type of mentality so developed is usually egoistic in nature and conditioned to a certain cultural and anthropocentric bias. This is why western culture glorifies the names and personalities of its scientists, designating even natural laws after them. Such an egoistic intellect easily gets caught in the outer world and its materialistic values. The culture such an outwardly direct mind creates easily becomes commercial and conquest oriented, viewing the external world as the true reality and wanting to possess it at all costs.

Each culture, therefore, has an intellectual power or power of intelligence (Buddhi Shakti) which it develops, that guides it and represents its characteristic nature. The Buddhi Shakti of the West, reflecting a materialist orientation, has embodied itself in matter and energy based technologies. The Buddhi Shakti of the East, reflecting a spiritual orientation, has embodied itself in consciousness and Yoga based technologies. Both these mental powers, though having a different orientation, can be integrated, but the higher power or Shakti of nature towards the evolution of consciousness must become the guiding force. It is the basis for any real civilization to link us up with the cosmos or take us to the eternal.

There needs to be a new Buddhi Shakti in order to energize a genuine Indic School of Thought. Such a power is generated not by mere words but by a power

of consciousness and a connection to the cosmic mind. Only through the flow of this power of consciousness into the mind can the appropriate dharmic institutions be built. It requires not simply developing an intellectual culture but a new spiritual culture that includes and transcends the mind. May such a new Buddhi Shakti, which also represents the energy of the Goddess Durga, arise worldwide! May we once more seek the cosmic mind and not rest content with the merely human!

Part II.4

Indic Civilization: A Light for the World

What is the civilization of the subcontinent of India? Does it have a place among the great civilizations of the world like Europe or China? Or is it some cultural backwater with little to offer but regressive social customs, overpopulation and disease? Does India have a great history and important traditions for the entire world to study and emulate, or is it merely a way station for different invaders whose culture came mainly from the outside and who left mainly trails of destruction? Was the movement of civilization always west to east, with India merely imitating trends from the Middle East and Europe, or was there an east to west movement of culture from India enriching or even molding that of the West? And was there any significant civilization east of India into southeast Asia in ancient times that was not simply a product of western influences? After all, India is geographically more connected and culturally has had more ties to the east and the south than the west and the north during the historical period.

Let us examine these questions because they are crucial to understanding the place of India in world civilization. However, if we look at the history of India as defined in

modern European developed textbooks, there is really not much to tell. India does not count for much in the history of the world, which appears would have been about the same without it. Indic civilization in importance in world civilization ranks far behind not only Europe but also those of the Middle East and China. However, is this the real truth of the matter, or simply the legacy of colonial thinking that has left a strong mark upon current views of the world?

Historically, India is examined only relative to a few connections to the West; notably to classical Greece, the most honored ancient civilization for western historians. India's own local connections in the subcontinent and to regions south and east are not given any weight. India is interpreted through the West, not in its own right. This suggests the need for a new examination of Indic civilization as we move out of the era of western dominated culture.

The Development of Civilization in India: Mysteries or Misinterpretations?

The history of the subcontinent of India begins with the mysterious Harappan culture, which was certainly one of the great wonders of the ancient world. Harappan culture, as revealed by hundreds of archaeological sites, was the largest and most sophisticated urban civilization of the world at its time, the third millennium

BCE (c. 3100 1900 BCE). It occupied a vast geographical region from the Amu Darya River in Afghanistan in the northwest across the Ganga in the east. In the southwest it stretched to the coast of Iran and down nearly as far as Mumbai, with important coastal sites in Gujarat and Kachchh. It contained not only the two large cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa but nearly a dozen comparable large urban sites. While Harappa and Mohenjodaro are about 100 hectares in size, Lakhmirwala and Rakhigarhi are about 225 hectares, Gurnikalan is about 145, Hasanpur is about 100 and Ganweriwala is about 80. All these sites are in the Sarasvati heartland with Rakhigari in the Kurukshetra region itself, northwest of Delhi.

Harappa and Mohenjodaro are certainly not the largest, though they remain better excavated because of the longer period of work on them. Yet still textbooks talk of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, as if these remain the most important. They still refer to the culture as the 'Indus Valley', though the great majority of the sites on the dried banks of the Sarasvati. In short, there has been an attempt to freeze the archaeological picture to Harappa and Mohenjodaro in spite of new evidence that these were more peripheral than central to the greater Sarasvati civilization.

These Harappan, or better called 'Sarasvati' cities, were better planned, organized and interconnected than those of Egypt or Mesopotamia of the time, both of

which regions could have fit comfortably in the boundaries of Harappan India. Writing also arose in India before 3000 BCE or by the same time as in the Middle East. All the antecedents of Harappan civilization have been traced in the Indian subcontinent through various pre-Harappan sites back to the great village complex of Mehrgarh, which was the largest of its time c. 7000 BCE. In other words, ancient civilization in India was advanced and indigenous, comparable to anything in the Middle East at the same time.

Yet in the study of ancient history we read little about Harappan/Sarasvati India and much more about the much smaller cultures of Sumeria and Egypt. The contribution of Harappan India to world civilization is generally ignored or simply missed altogether by a lack of any real looking for it. It is as if nothing significant in terms of urban planning, agriculture, trade, science, literature or religion survived from the culture, which was an historical dead end. By such views, Harappa disappeared without a trace, leaving little influence on the subcontinent, much less on the world outside. There is no other ancient culture of its size and sophistication that has been ascribed such little effect on civilization.

In addition, there has been little effort to connect Harappan culture south and east from India. Western Indologists have created a divide in their minds, as if the India of Harappan times was an island that ended at

the Ganga, which was an impenetrable ocean. Though there are many interesting archaeological sites to the east, these have been ignored on principle, as if Indic civilization had to be connected only to the northwest.

According to what is now an old perspective—though it still dominates history books today—this mysterious Harappan culture was terminated by the ubiquitous Vedic Aryans who came pouring in from Central Asia. Originally, the Vedic Aryans were blamed as the destroyers of Harappa, thundering out of Afghanistan into the plains of India like Attila, the Hun into the Roman world. This view has been highlighted in textbooks and depictions for several decades, since Wheeler, an important early Harappan archaeologist, proposed it, though his scanty skeletal evidence for it was eventually proved to be entirely faulty.

Now that recent archaeology has proved that Harappan culture ended because of the drying up and changing courses of rivers in the region, notably the Sarasvati River of Vedic fame, not owing to any outside invasion. Because of this current Western Indologists have turned the Vedic Aryans into small groups of intruders into India in the post-Harappan era. They have given up the Aryan invasion of Harappa and replaced it with an Aryan migration in the post-Harappan era. The Aryans are no longer styled the destroyers of Harappa but are still given an ignoble status as outside barbarians, who through some trick or cunning managed to impose their

language on the older cultures of the region by a means yet to be discovered.

Though this earlier view of the Vedic Aryans as the destroyers of Harappa has been exposed as a great blunder—one of the greatest errors by modern historians—scholars have still not been willing to give credit to the maligned Vedic people. Nor have they bothered to remove the old wrong view from history books, which still usually contain it. Even when their ideas have been proven erroneous, they have yet to question their methodology or prime beliefs—their fixation on Vedic culture as deriving from outside India, with no real indigenous Indic culture surviving on its own.

Let us be clear about this—so far there is no civilization, ruins, artifacts, or skeletal remains, much less cities that have been proven to be those of the Vedic Aryans apart from the Harappan or other indigenous cultures of the region. The cultural identity of the Vedic Aryans remains as mysterious as the disappearance of the Harappans by such views. There is no separate identity for the Vedic Aryans that has ever been shown apart from the Harappans and pre-Harappans.

Vedic Literature

The Vedas remain the largest literature from the pre-Buddha era in the world (before 500 BCE). They dwarf

the Bible, the Iliad, and the Egyptian Book of the Dead or any other such ancient records. Yet in spite of their extent, they are not counted for much in western accounts of civilization. Western Indologists doubt whether the Vedas were even composed in India or represented the indigenous traditions of the region in the first place. The Vedas have been reduced to primitive nature poetry that later generations unwisely attributed to a divine or seer vision.

Though Vedic literature has continued to inspire spiritual and social movements on the subcontinent to the present day, it is looked upon by modern scholars as little more than a ruin or fossil. As the record of an intrusive nomadic culture, rather than a stable civilization, it is a literature that probably shouldn't even exist. That Indians are inspired by the Vedas becomes only another sign of their lack of discrimination for the western mind. Why such a primitive literature would be faithfully preserved for millennia is something they have no reason for apart from the cultural backwardness of the Hindus.

Nor surprisingly, western Vedic scholars have done little more than catalogue Vedic grammar, which though quite sophisticated even by their accounts doesn't cause them to look for something deeper. They know little of any spiritual secrets of the Vedas that traditional scholars have indicated are in the texts, which everywhere speak of what is hidden, secret, or

only for the initiated. Such Indologists don't see any deeper meaning in the Vedas. Though modern scholars, both Christian and non-Christian, look at the Bible in terms of many layers of symbolism, probing behind the strange metaphors and events found within it, they ignore deeper levels in Vedic literature, even though the Vedic tradition describes these. The Vedas speak of special mantras, Divine names, and higher states of consciousness much like later Hinduism, with a sevenfold symbolism much like the seven chakras of Yogic thought.

Yet just as Western Indology has erected an artificial geographical border on ancient Indian civilization, refusing to allow it to go beyond the Ganga, they have created a similar dividing line on Indic or yogic spirituality, refusing to see it in any texts before the Upanishads. They look at the Vedas from a point of view apart from the Indic tradition. Whatever typically Indian or Hindu occurs in the Vedas, they ascribe to an influence of the indigenous people on the Aryan intruders, not to anything that really belonged to the Vedic mind.

Such scholars have their own rigid time line on Vedic culture. They refuse to connect it to anything before 1500 BCE, as if Vedic culture had no roots before that period and certainly no prior connection with India, in spite of it becoming the representative ancient literature of the entire area, emulated throughout the

region ever since. As part of this, they have erected a semantic divide as well. They rigidly separate Vedic deities like Indra from later Hindu deities like Shiva, even though these have similar characteristics. They ignore the role of Vedic deities like Agni, Vayu and Surya in later internal Yoga practices as the powers of inner transformation, though they are clearly there.

Western Indologists have created a linguistic divide that follows their proposed temporal and geographical borders. They will connect the Indo-European languages of India to cultures of Europe and Central Asia. But they fail to take linguistic and cultural connections south and east in India itself, particularly before the time of the Buddha. They have tried to erect certain language families as absolute boundaries, when these are simply convenient categories with much overlap and many variations. They emphasize the existence of Indo-European and non-Indo-European language groups in India to make the former into intruders, ignoring the fact that Indo-European and non-Indo-European linguistic groups occur together everywhere in the ancient world, including Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. In fact, Central Asia and the Eastern European plain— the main proposed homeland for the Indo-Europeans—has always been a highway occupied by shifting populations differing in language and ethnicity including Slavic, Germanic, Celtic, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Slavic, Iranian, Scythian,

Turkic, Mongolian and other very different groups. That it could preserve any pure linguistic or ethnic homeland is almost absurd.

Such scholars highlight place and river names connecting the Vedas to Afghanistan but ignore the many Vedic/Sanskrit place and river names to the south and east of India as well. Though the river names of north India are Sanskritic as far back as can be traced, they still portray the Vedic people as intruders into the region.

Modern linguists have also failed to understand the nature of the Vedic language, which was not a common spoken tongue that can be reduced to some historical sound changes. Vedic Sanskrit was called 'Chandas' or poetry and was a highly refined elite language of the higher classes. Just as later Sanskrit, it could be continued for many centuries with little change owing to its elite and sacred status. Sanskrit remains one of the world's most sophisticated and scientific languages. This suggests that it was the product of a great civilization, not the development of nomadic peoples. Indeed, the Rigveda itself, as great modern teachers like Sri Aurobindo proclaim, has a sophistication of language on par with anything produced in the history of the world, with profound plays on symbolism, sound and meaning. It requires a great civilization to explain its sophistication. It is not the primitive literature

Western Indologists require in order to justify their theories.

Western scholars have looked at Harappan civilization as a great set of urban ruins from a culture that had little effect on history. They have similarly looked at the vast extent of Vedic literature as a collection of texts that had no real culture to support it. This means that the archaeological remains of ancient India, however extensive, are dissociated from any continuity of civilization in the region. Similarly, the existent literature from ancient India has been removed from the ancient civilizations of the region—and from any real civilization at all. We are left with mute Harappan ruins on one hand, and a Vedic literature from a strange nomadic world that no one has ever found on the other.

Yet the historical texts of the region—whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jain—do not speak of such a discontinuity. They are unaware of these invaders and all proudly call themselves Arya, not as an ethnic term but as a term of refinement, nobility and respect. Arya Dharma is another early name for Buddhism and can be applied to Hindu and Jain traditions as well. It is perhaps the only term that can include all the dharmic traditions of the region.

Indic Civilization

The Indic record of history is first of an ancient Vedic civilization centered on the Sarasvati river that relocated to the Ganga and Yamuna area after the drying up of the Sarasvati and the shifting of its headwaters. The Indic record is second of a Puranic Hindu and Buddhist tradition on the Ganga that arose as an adaptation or reform of the Sarasvati tradition. This agrees with the archaeological record today that the Harappan culture was centered on the Sarasvati river and the end of this civilization occurred because of the drying up of the river. In other words, the Sarasvati to Ganga shift of civilization in ancient India is reflected in Vedic and post-Vedic literature. Still, western scholars remain reluctant to connect the two, in part because few of them keep up with archaeological findings that show the Sarasvati-Harappa connection, but also because the implications are too upsetting to western paradigms of history that support the supremacy of western civilization.

If we look at the culture and literature of the subcontinent of India, it is clear that India has a civilization older, more complex and continuous than perhaps any other culture in the world. English literature, for example, mainly goes back to the sixteenth century or to Chaucer a few centuries before. Almost every region of India has an older regional

literature than the English, whether it is Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kashmir or Bengal, which in turn look back to much older Sanskrit models.

European civilization goes back to ancient Greece and Rome, about two thousand years ago. Yet at the time of ancient Greece and Rome there was no European civilization per se. The Greeks or Romans had no concept of themselves as Europeans. The idea of Europe as a cultural entity is no older than Charlemagne, who in the ninth century started the Holy Roman Empire. Greece and Rome were integral parts of the Mediterranean sphere of culture that included North Africa, Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Central and Eastern Europe were hardly populated at the time and mainly consisted of marshland. The literature of ancient Greece and Rome was destroyed or marginalized by the Christianization of the region, breaking the continuity of culture in the region.

On the other hand, in India today, Sanskrit literature like the Mahabharata, which dates back to the Greco-Roman period, if not much before, is still alive and part of the culture, including that of the common people in India today. No such Greek or Roman texts have this living status in western culture and have not had for nearly two thousand years. Sanskrit literature not only dwarfs that of Greece and Rome, it is both older and more continuous. All of classical Sanskrit literature was quite old by the time Europe emerged from the dark

ages, and slowly began to form its modern civilization and its proud nation states.

Western Misinterpretation of Indic Civilization

The problem is that the West has defined civilization in its own image, disregarding other civilizations and their different approaches and values. First, it has defined civilization in terms of science and technology, as a largely materialistic development. Clearly, the West did pioneer most of modern science and technology during the period from 1500-2000 AD. However, prior to that Europe was no more advanced scientifically than the rest of the world, and often behind it. India and China were equal or ahead of Europe in science and technology throughout the medieval period and in the ancient era as well. Today we see scientists from Asia making their mark on modern science, which is no longer an affair that belongs to Europe or America. Indeed, there are more trained scientists in India than in America today. If we define civilization as science and technology, clearly the era of European predominance is coming to an end. It was more an historical phase than any lasting domination of world civilization, which historically has been more dominated by larger and older cultures in Asia.

Second, and more importantly, the West has defined culture in terms of its own approaches to religion, art

and philosophy, even though these are rather recent, fragmentary or at odds with each other. It is not that India does not have religion, art or philosophy. In fact, India has had probably more of these than the West, but that the Indic approach to these aspects of culture, being different, causes them to be ignored or denigrated on principle.

In terms of religion and spirituality, India has offered the world a much greater literature, older and larger traditions, and a deeper cosmic knowledge than the West has ever produced. Look at the Vedas, Upanishads, Epics, Puranas, Tantras and Yoga Shastras in the Hindu tradition, and the many Buddhist, Jain, Sikh and other teachings as well. In the modern world, if people are looking to spiritual practices, they employ mainly Indic terms of dharma, karma, dhyana, prana, shakti, kundalini, and chakras. Most of these terms can be found in the Rigveda itself! If we are looking for practical way to develop a higher consciousness and connection with the universal mind, it is in the Indic Yoga tradition that we can find the way, not in the mainstream of western civilization which has not been concerned with such higher realities.

In terms of philosophy, the Indic tradition is similarly older, more continuous and more diverse than that of the West. From the six systems of Vedic philosophy, the Nyaya-Vaisheshika, the Samkhya-Yoga and Purva and Uttara Mimamsa, to the four schools of classical

Buddhist philosophy, the Tantric schools like Kashmiri Shaivism, or the materialistic Charavaka school, it has an extraordinary sweep of the human mind and the universe itself. And there is in all of this no mention of the Greek philosophers that the West has emulated as the greatest in this field, who clearly came later than the main traditions of India. As the work of modern philosophers like Sri Aurobindo indicates, it is a living tradition. India maintains a tradition of spiritual, ontological and meditational philosophies that have not yet succumbed to the materialist and scientific paradigms of the West that more or less put an end to such an independent philosophical tradition in the West over a hundred years ago.

One could argue, therefore, that India is not a backwater of civilization but rather that Western Indologists represent a backwater of scholarship. They have so far failed to really study or get to know their subject. They are content with secondhand views, stereotypes, or speculation based upon their Eurocentric mindset. Their knowledge of Sanskrit is often poor. Their direct examination of Vedic texts is limited. In short, their proposed history of India is not deeply researched and has not yet changed from the original colonial views in the nineteenth century. In fact, Western Indology has contributed almost nothing, and certainly nothing significant in recent decades, to

the understanding of India or to the unique nature of its civilization.

A more progressive western scholarship exists relative to Africa than to India. What few Indology departments exist in the West are being downsized and are generally dominated by scholars who do not feel any real affinity to the Indic tradition. They use Indology to promote their own political or intellectual views that are often anti-Hindu, if not anti-India. Western Indology remains more defined by Marx, Freud or the Bible than anything authentically Indic. This is very different from departments on China, the Middle East or Christianity and Islam that are dominated by scholars who have a real appreciation of these traditions. With representatives like these, India does not need enemies in the academic world.

Today, the West, except for spiritual seekers, has yet to really confront, much less understand the civilization of India. The civilization of India has different values and different goals. It cannot fit into western models of culture, whether monotheistic religion, western intellectual culture or materialistic science. It is not that the civilization of India is wanting but that the standard used to judge it is insufficient. Its traditions go deep and remain alive, in spite efforts to denigrate them. Note the recent Kumbha Mela in which over thirty million people took a sacred dip in the Ganga on one day. There is no gathering comparable to this in western

civilization. Yet while this was the largest gathering in world history and the largest religious and spiritual event, the American media scarcely noticed it (though that in UK did give it some attention).

The West has defined India according to its own vision and an external contact with the region that has seldom been deep or even open-minded. The West defines India according to its contact with the West, which according to its own image. It ignores that the subcontinent of India is a well-defined cultural and geographic sphere, whose main associations historically have been to the east and the south. Its reduction of Indic civilization has caused a similar reduction of the related civilizations of Southeast Asia, Indochina and Indonesia, which are not given much place in world culture either.

Today there needs to be a new examination and definition of Indic civilization, what is traditionally called Bharatiya Samskriti. It must be judged by its own standard, not that of an alien tradition. Indic civilization must be redefined not only for the past, but also for the present and the future. It has a great history and the world's most ancient and sophisticated literature that the world has preserved. It has not been a borrower of culture but an originator of culture. If we look to Asia, Indic culture and religions have created the dominant tone for the entire region from China to Indonesia to India, and to Central Asia in the pre-Islamic period.

The coming century will see an awakening in Asia on all levels, just as Asiatic religions are spreading to the West. Even Catholicism is seeking to enrich itself spiritually through its encounter with Buddhism and Vedanta. For this a reexamination of Indic civilization is crucial. It is time for the West to give up its cultural arrogance and look to Mother India anew. It is time for Indian intellectuals to give up their cultural alienation and drink deep from the well of their own traditions. While certainly there are superstitions and backward customs in the country that need correction, the core of civilization that has persisted since Vedic times, remains pure. It can generate a new and higher culture if its own if given the chance. May that Rishi culture again come forth for the benefit of all!

Part II.5

Multinational Corporations and Global Education

The Multinational Control of Education and the Media Worldwide

Schools in America are more and more coming under the funding of multinational corporations. This is true not only of universities, where corporate influence is long standing, but even the case with public schools. Children not only grow up but also receive their education under the gaze of corporate America. For example, companies like Coca Cola sponsor computers for public schools in exchange for advertising, coke machines in the halls and other favors. Young children come under the influence of corporate America when they start school, which is supposed to be free of commercial influences and propaganda. Naturally, this gets them into the commercial model of living before they are able to exercise any discrimination about it. It insures that they will be compliant consumers for the rest of their lives, programmed by corporate America to do its bidding and fit into its system.

Of course, universities have long been funded by big business, particularly by the weapons industry and the pharmaceutical drug companies, which are among the largest and most profitable businesses in the world.

This is because universities require endowments and departments need outside funding which is not easily available elsewhere, particularly in the era of university downsizing in which public funding for schools is getting progressively reduced. Multinational corporations are increasingly setting the agenda for education in the West, which is losing any appearance of objectivity and increasing promoting commercial interests and values.

The same patronage has always extended to the global media, which is commercially sponsored by multinational corporations and naturally upholds their interests. Even public television programs in America like the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour rely on funding by multinational corporations like Exxon Oil who air short mini-commercials before the programs begin. One wonders how objective and unbiased the reporting in such programs can be.

This corporate influence on education is not limited to the western world. The western model of education has been adopted throughout the world, including most of Asia, Africa and South America. Educational institutions worldwide generally follow the western model and often uncritically fall into a multinational agenda, following programs, ideas and teachers who are proponents of the multinational consumerist approach. Not surprisingly, local, traditional and native cultures throughout the world are being eliminated in favor of

the global consumer culture of the West, which, not surprisingly, is deemed progressive in the schools.

Just as colonial interests suppressed traditional and native systems of education during the colonial era, western influenced academia and its multinational support groups continue to do so today. Traditional cultures are viewed as politically incorrect, economically backward, and having an inaccurate sense of their own history. The multinationals are simply the old colonial interests in a new form, reducing culture to a consumerist model that can be easily manipulated at a global level and which destroys or subordinates any local culture.

During their colonial rule the British banned Ayurveda in India, closed down Sanskrit schools and denigrated the Hindu religion and Indian culture in the programs that they set up in the country. Independent India continued uncritically the British model of education and has made few changes in the textbooks since the end of colonial rule. The result is that westernized schools and teachers in India today continue to attack their own cultural traditions just as the British did, quoting western educational authorities, which they see as universal, rational, scientific or objective, calling their own culture, which they seldom bother to study, communal, irrational or superstitious. This westernized education in India has been against the traditional educational models of the country and does not want

such subjects as Ayurveda, astrology, Yoga or Vedanta taught in the schools. Any effort to reintroduce such local cultural traditions is deemed regressive, biased and dangerous.

Indology and Multinationalism

Indological studies is another field of western academia continuing the old colonial model under the guise of globalism or science. It also has changed little since the end of the colonial era, still promoting the Aryan Invasion theory and the idea that Indian civilization is mainly a borrowing from the West. Western Indologists follow a western cultural agenda and interpret India and its history according to the values of western civilization, global capitalism or, alternatively, global socialism. Like many western scholars, they focus on western ideals of free trade, democracy and religious conversion as the solution to India's problems. They denigrate Asian traditions of as inhumane, ignoring the ethical and dharmic foundation of these cultures that is much more spiritual than what the West is promoting instead.

Western Indologists control the discourse on the Vedas, writing the textbooks and pronouncing certain speculations as facts, though they may consist of no hard data at all, but only speculations agreeable to the western mind. They reject any traditional scholarship as

fantasy, error or fraud. They would interpret the history of India as if no traditional Indian ever knew anything about it, and as if Indians before the European era had no real knowledge of their own culture or its origins.

Any practicing Hindu or anyone honoring Hindu spiritual teachings is almost automatically disbarred from Indology in the West and academic institutions based upon the western model. That is why one finds so few Indians in these fields, unless they are leftists who have proved their worth to western academia by fervently denouncing their own culture. Western Indology is often borderline racist, taking in only Uncle Toms who kowtow to its models of thought. Even in Hindu religious studies in the West few if any of the texts used will be written by practicing Hindus or reflecting the views of any contemporary Hindu teachers. The textbooks and translations on Hinduism will come from Marxists, Christians or anyone who is not a Hindu.

Not surprisingly, in Western Indology, the Vedas, which are essentially spiritual documents, are not looked upon in any spiritual light but dissected according to outer views only. Indologists think that that materialistic-intellectual-political angle of western ideas can unravel the secrets of the ancient mantras that traditionally required initiation and asceticism in order to penetrate. Such an Indology is generally anti-India and cannot be looked at as representing of Indic

civilization or any Indic school of thought. Such scholars are not working to understand Hinduism in a sympathetic way in the modern world; they are working to suppress it.

Today in India, like in many countries in the world, there is the arising of a post-independence nationalism. In some countries, this occurred shortly after independence. In India it was delayed by fifty years, largely because the country was ruled by an intellectual elite educated in England whose cultural sympathies resided overseas. This is also resulting in more independent thinkers arising, who are questioning, though belatedly, the western model. The result is the revival of a Vedic and Hindu school of thought. One can see this in the many new books on ancient India, generally by non-academics, which have been recently printed and are widely read in India today. A new focus on the secrets of the ancient world is becoming popular in India as it remains in the West (witness the many television and movie programs on such topics both documentary and fictional).

Naturally, western academia, its colonial legacy and its new corporate sponsorship will try to resist the Hindu movement, not out of any necessary spite but simply to preserve their position of power. Western Indologists will want to keep the arguments within the western school of thought because they control the rules of the game. They will see their control of Indology not as a

colonial legacy but as a means of protecting the field of study from Hindu distortions. Not surprisingly, we already find Western Indology and its Indian proponents condemning the new Indic scholarship on principle and even having courses on it as a form of communalism or religious fundamentalism. What they are really afraid of is that Indians will reclaim Indology and then reclaim their own culture. This will cause them to lose control over the institutions and the debate about India, losing their niche in the academic world.

A New Hindu Vaishya Dharma

Hindus should be aware of the multinational influence on education, and not be naïve about western corporate, political and religious agendas. Anyone who controls the financial purse strings of education will naturally want education to represent views that they follow or at least respect. It is only to be expected. Those who control the money in education unfortunately usually control what is being taught, whether directly or indirectly.

Wealthy Hindus should seek to fund proper education, not only in scientific fields but also about India and its civilization. This requires not merely funding Indological departments in the West—where their money has little accountability—but also their own institutions outside

of western culture. They must take financial responsibility for their own tradition if they expect it to endure and not expect western institutions to create a view of India, particularly of ancient India and its spiritual traditions, that will be favorable and will sustain it in the modern world.

Wealthy Hindus or those in the corporate world should also seek to bring a greater dharmic perspective into business activities. They should promote a new globally sensitive and ecologically aware Vaishya Dharma, following Vedic and yogic values of unity, interdependence and a recognition of the sacred nature of all life. India’s own Vaishya Dharma or dharmic values for business include respect for nature, human diversity and cultural and religious pluralism that the West is also looking toward for the future. Certainly, a new spiritually aware business class and global business consciousness is required to get us out of the current crisis and to build an educational system that goes beyond corporate greed or the seeking of cultural hegemony. For this, such a resurgent Vaishya Dharma is the key.

Yoga, Ayurveda and Hindu principles of management can help transform the current destructive multinational scene into something more enlightened, showing how spiritual principles can make for a better management of our human and natural resources, putting material development in the context of the

evolution of consciousness. We must move from multinational capitalism to a global culture of Dharma, not only in spirituality but also in the economic sphere, which is where our cultural spirituality is really put into practice or simply remains a mere slogan.

Part II.6

The Spiritual Divide in Vedic Scholarship

The Vedas are part of a great spiritual-religious tradition that includes many great saints, sages, yogis, rishis, swamis and sadhus from ancient to modern times. Naturally, those who follow the Vedic tradition will interpret the Vedas very differently than those who don't. Vedic texts are mainly concerned with spiritual issues; the relationship of human beings with the cosmic powers and the higher Self (Paramatman). Historical, economic and cultural factors are incidental, as much as they would be in any religious or poetic texts. The greater Vedic concerns are karma, rebirth, liberation, ritual worship of the Gods and Goddesses, self-purification, mantra, pranayama and Yoga practices of various types.

Most of the terms that came to characterize Indian civilization and yogic spirituality can be found in the Rigveda itself. These include dharma (natural law), karma (ritualistic or repeated action), dhyana (meditation), mantra, satyam (truth), Yoga and even Atman (the Self). Special Vedic terms for higher principles also exist like ritam (cosmic law) and brihat (the vast). Many spiritual and psychological terms exist as manas (mind), dhi (intelligence or buddhi), chitta (heart), kratu (will), daksha (skill), manisha (inspiration)

and medha (wisdom). Such terminology indicates more spiritually to the Vedas than nomads, rituals or primitive poetry.

Most Western Indologists, not having a connection to the Vedic spiritual tradition or its terminology, cannot appreciate the spiritual-religious views of the Vedas. They have a different view of the world, history and progress—that of western civilization and its values—which colors their perception in another direction. They do not practice the mantras and meditations of the Vedic tradition so that they can know these at an intimate level. They are at best detached observers from the outside, at worst hostile critics with an agenda to denigrate or eliminate the Vedic tradition that they see as wrong or obsolete according to their own values. The result is that Western Indologists look at the Rigveda on an outer level only, not as a sophisticated system devised to develop a higher consciousness that transcends time and space but as primitive poetry or crude philosophy of unsophisticated tribes that should has little real value.

There are some exceptions to this rule. A few western scholars do have a background in various yogic paths and the teachings of different Hindu gurus. They have a deeper view, more sympathetic to the tradition. Unfortunately, they remain a minority and often keep their views hidden in order to protect their positions or because there is no real forum to air them.

Not surprisingly, most current Indologists reject the scholarship of spiritual Hindus on principle as being irrational, unscientific or politically incorrect. They give little credence to the Vedic scholarship on a spiritual level like that of Sri Aurobindo or Swami Dayananda of the Arya Samaj, even when such figures had a high level of Sanskrit training.

Older western Indologists like Max Muller followed a western view of religion evolving from primitive polytheism to monotheism, which was applied to India, with Vedic polytheism giving rise to Vedantic monism. However, this has little to do with the Vedic, Puranic and Tantric view in which monism and pluralism exist together in harmony, which idea we find from the Rigveda itself, with the One manifesting itself through the Many. Similarly, Marxist scholars look at the Vedic tradition in terms of a caste struggle that is simply a modification of the class struggle of Marxist theories. The Marxist view of history as moving towards a classless society and materialistic utopia is also quite foreign to Vedic thought that is trying to take us beyond our human limitations, organizing society toward the goal of Moksha or spiritual liberation.

Therefore, spiritual and religious Hindus must be careful in accepting interpretations of the Vedic tradition put forth by those who do not honor Hindu spirituality. Those who are not spiritual Hindus can perhaps offer something of value about the outer

dimension of Vedic texts through historical studies or archaeology, but are likely to miss the main thing, the spiritual dimension. Even when they comment on outer political or historical dimensions of the Vedic tradition they are prone to misinterpretation, being unable to perceive the sophistication of Vedic civilization through its spiritual roots.

There are many examples of this problem. The Vedic war between the powers of light and darkness gets turned by modern scholars into a war between light and dark-skinned people. Vedic rishis like Vasishta and Vamadeva, regarded as Self-realized yogis, get turned into primitive shamans. The Vedic view of the universe as a series of oceans gets turned into the imaginings of nomads in Central Asia who never saw the sea! Soma, which is a symbol for Ananda or bliss in the highest spiritual sense, gets reduced to some primitive intoxicant.

The Example of Ramakrishna in Western Indology

There is a very glaring example of the scholarly divide about the Hindu tradition relative to modern teachers. Paramahansa Ramakrishna is regarded in India as a God-realized yogi, who mastered all religions and all Yoga paths, a saint and a bhakta almost without peer. Recently, a western Indologist, Jeffrey Kripal, came out with a study of Ramakrishna called Kali’s Child. The book tries to expose Ramakrishna as a repressed homosexual who indulged in child abuse, with all of his

spiritual experiences being little more than neurotic fantasies. Ramakrishna's entire practice of the many paths of Yoga and perhaps the entire tradition itself are reduced to little more than a delusion! In one fell swoop all the yogic knowledge and experience of Ramakrishna gets dismissed as fraudulent. The Hindu view of a many levels of consciousness from the human ego to the Absolute gets reduced to a sexual neurosis and compulsion. Ramakrishna's experience of all the seven chakras gets all kept below the belt!

Such a Freudian interpretation of great personalities is, of course, nothing new or surprising, since Freud himself, though a Jew, identified Oedipus with Moses and turned one of the founders of his own religious tradition into a sexual neurotic! It is almost embarrassing that western scholars have not gotten beyond such sexual obsessions. This reduction of a person or a subject to a sexual deviation is another form of negationism and stereotyping. It is a form of intellectual weakness and character assassination for those who cannot debate the deeper philosophical and spiritual issues that a figure like Ramakrishna evokes. The magic of the Goddess Kali, the beauty of temple worship, and the vision of the Atman are all effaced by a cynical pop psychology. Kundalini and the chakras, samadhi and Self-realization, which Kripal probably thinks is all neurosis of one form or another, is all forgotten.

Such sexual charges are nothing new for westerners that compulsively read sexuality into the Hindu tradition or any other native, indigenous or pagan groups. Anything foreign, exotic or beyond ordinary western culture becomes sex, largely because of the sexually saturated nature of western civilization. Islam similarly, which is hardly an ascetic religion with its polygamy, also imagined eroticism in Hindu temples and needed to destroy them accordingly. I recall recently hearing a western Christian speak of the eroticism of the Bhagavad Gita. That the Gita is an ascetic text with no eroticism was lost on the person, whose mind was still working on the Hindu equals pagan equals erotic equation regardless of the Hindu tradition of yogic detachment and withdrawal from the senses.

Hindu Avoidance of the Historical Debate

Some Hindu scholars have ignored the outer dimension of the Vedas and focused on the spiritual meaning only. Some traditionalists have insisted that there is no historical dimension to the Vedas at all. They use the Vedas being eternal and apaurusheya (impersonal) to reject any historical interpretation of Vedic texts, though Itihasa-Purana (history) was one of the main traditional methods of interpreting Vedic mantras. When spiritual or religious Hindus do make a contribution on the historical side, it is often rejected

out of hand because of their religious background and so they are reluctant to continue in the debate.

In this regard, we should recognize that spiritual and religious Hindus can add much to the historical study of Vedic and Indic traditions, whatever background we may have. There are obviously many Christian, Jewish and Islamic scholars, who are quite staunch or even conservative in their beliefs, active in the scholarship in their fields. To reject spiritual and religious Hindus on any issues of history is a religious prejudice. To quote their spiritual views of higher consciousness (or their belief in astrology) as proof of their poor scholarship on historical matters is also inappropriate.

Other Hindus have ignored the historical debate and emphasize promoting spiritual Hinduism through Yoga and Vedanta instead. They have found that the western mind is more open to these spiritual teachings and will accept them, even when holding to the western view of history or various anti-Hindu stereotypes. These teachers may not call themselves Hindus and emphasis a universal path uniting all religions. They consider that in the long term people will change their views on outer cultural issues, once they have adopted a Hindu-based spiritual way of life and values. For this reason many Hindu gurus shun social or political issues, even if they may inwardly sympathize with Hindu causes.

While such an approach can be helpful, we cannot ignore cultural and historical issues in the long run.

There are ways of dealing with these without abandoning a spiritual view or without unnecessarily offending seekers in the West. In fact, such Hindu cultural critiques may appeal to seekers in the West, affording the Yoga tradition a greater intellectual sophistication and social relevance, and draw in those who otherwise would not be attracted to it.

Two Levels of Vedic Scholarship

We must recognize two levels of Vedic scholarship. The first is a spiritual level, which will be honored more by those who practice the Vedic teachings. The second is an historical level. This is what modern academia honors—particularly when it follows a standard of political correctness that it can agree with. We are faced with a contradiction between these two views, a gulf that is wide, though not entirely irreconcilable.
Individuals regarded as true Vedic scholars and pandits in India will not be accepted as true scholars by western academics because they don't follow the rational and materialistic methodologies that the West honors. This is why figures like Sri Aurobindo will not be read relative to ancient India. Similarly, those regarded as important Vedic scholars by western academia will be not be honored by spiritual Hindus because they are not inwardly connected to the Vedic tradition. No Hindu will look up to western academicians since Max

Muller as spiritual gurus in the Vedic tradition! We should remember Upanishadic injunctions about who can really learn the inner truth of the teachings and the dangers of giving it to those who are not really qualified. "This Vedantic teaching should not be given to one who is not peaceful, who is not a son or a disciple. Who has the highest devotion to God and guru, these spoken truths become clear to that great soul (Svetasvatara Upanishad VI.21-22)." Clearly no good western academician would accept these values. Their path is not discipleship in the tradition but a view from the outside that is often misinformed.

However, it is possible to balance the spiritual and historical interpretations of the Vedic tradition. Spiritual scholars can acknowledge the historical dimension and seek to bring clarity to it. Historical scholars can acknowledge the spiritual dimension as being there, even if they are in no position to really comment on it. However, while students of Hindu spirituality can acknowledge history, academics that deny spirituality will be less likely to bring it into their discussions.

Certainly spiritual Hindus must address historical issues. To do this they must create a new Vedic historical methodology. They need not ignore Hindu historical sources but must combine these with a multidisciplinary approach linking literature, astronomy, archaeology, geology and other factors.

They should also aim at a scientific approach to communicate to a modern audience. On the other hand, scholars who are not Hindus must recognize that much of the Vedic teaching will be lost on them as they are unfamiliar with the religious and spiritual factors involved. The key is for Hindus to take the lead in interpreting their tradition. Indology must return to India and encounter the full force of the Bharatiya tradition. This will occur when the Indian homeland of the Vedas is once more honored.

Devic and Asuric Civilizations and Scholarship

All ancient mythologies speak of the war between the Devas and the Asuras, the Gods and the anti-gods or titans, which is also the battle between the forces of light and darkness. This is the dominant image of the Rigveda and the Zend Avesta, but has traces everywhere in ancient thought, whether in the Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, Babylonian or Native American traditions. Following this model, we can postulate two types of civilization in the world as the 'Devic' or spiritual and the 'Asuric' or materialistic. In the Upanishads (Chandogya VIII.7), the main difference between the two groups is that the Asuras believe that the body is the Self or the true reality, while the Devas look beyond the body to pure consciousness.

Clearly, modern civilization, which is primarily western in origin and leadership, whether of the political left or right, is Asuric or bodily-based. Obviously modern commercialism is sensate and bodily-based and modern communism projects an entirely materialistic utopia. The dominant view of western religions is of heaven or paradise as a glorified physical realm, which requires the resurrection of the physical body to achieve. This means that both the religious and secular sides of western culture are bodily-based. Western civilization reflects the outer values of the ego, with its emphasis on famous personalities in all domains of life (including those of scientists and scholars). It is assertive, militant and greedy, not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in religion.

The western obsession with physical history as the real truth is another bodily-based compulsion that is arguably Asuric in nature. Its emphasis on physical remains for interpreting history, as with archaeological ruins or skeletons, demonstrates a bias for physical reality. It has no spiritual, dharmic or Devic view to balance this out. Western Indologists believe that their physical/outward-based view has given them the real keys to ancient India and Vedic civilization. They are like the Asura Virochana in the Upanishads who is content with the idea that the body is the Self. Their main concern in Vedic texts is dissecting the grammar, which

is an emphasis on the outer aspect of language that misses the spirit or meaning encased within it.

Western linguistics has a similar physical bias that ignores the spiritual basis of language. Their prime focus is physical indicators in some proposed Proto-Indo-European language, which they are constructing as if ancient languages were physically based forms of speech. They forget the obvious fact that ancient languages and cultures were ritualistic in nature, with a primary concern for the sacred, not our modern obsession with physical reality! Following this materialistic line, linguists have tried to determine common geographical and animal terms in Indo-European languages in order to identify the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans, oblivious to the spiritual focus of ancient Arya culture which was never geographically limited. This reflects the same concern for form over content that characterizes modern commercial culture. They glorify the husk and lose the edible fruit within it!

However, there have been Devic or spiritual elements hidden in western culture, whether in the Celts, Greeks, Christian mystics, or New Age aspiration. Similarly, there are Asuric forces in India that are quite powerful today, like its leftist intelligentsia that has dominated the country since independence. Even in the Devic or yogic field are gurus that are Asuric in nature, seeking to accumulate wealth and power for themselves. Today

the Asuric forces are on the ascendancy all over the world, unleashing powerful technological and mechanical forces threatening the very life on the planet. Therefore, Devic forces must unite and cross over any geographical barriers in order to once more defeat the Asuras.

The Devas are slowly awakening again. Reclaiming the Vedas— which preserve better than any text the spiritual heritage of humanity—is the key to bringing the Gods back. This means reclaiming the Vedas from Asuric (physical or body-based) scholarship back to a spiritual and yogic view. The Asuras always try to destroy or capture the Vedas in order to keep humanity spiritually in the dark. Just as the Asuras stole the Vedas in previous Yugas and the Gods had to win them back, Western Indologists are the modern Asuras who have tried to capture the Vedas in the contemporary world. It is time for a new group of Devas to win them back. This requires a spiritual and intellectual battle, for which a new power of Vishnu or higher consciousness is necessary. The Vedas contain the keys of mastery for humanity and the essence of our global spiritual heritage. Like the secrets of science they need to kept in good hands and used for our higher evolution.

Part II.7

Western Indology versus the Indic Tradition: The Intellectual Clash of Cultures

The sad fact is that after nearly two hundred years Western Indology has still failed to understand India, her culture, her soul or her history. It has progressed little beyond Eurocentric and missionary stereotypes, only adding Marxist, Freudian and other modern stereotypes to these, naively believing that these western ideologies are somehow dramatically enlightening to India and its profound spiritual culture, when they are usually irrelevant or inferior and have already failed in the West.

Meanwhile it has discovered little more in the vast treasures of Vedic culture than any primitive culture.

Western Indology does not understand the philosophy of India, its emphasis on dharma and karma, liberation and enlightenment, or its great traditions of Yoga and meditation. It does not acknowledge the value of its rishi/yogi culture and its Vedic origin. Nor does it recognize any such higher yogic spiritual tradition as behind any ancient civilizations or behind humanity as a whole. From its perspective, Indian spirituality is a self-serving fantasy hiding what is unscientific, inhumane or archaic.

Yet even more sadly Western Indology does not want to recognize that India as a unique civilization really exists. It fails to see any real identity to Indic civilization prior to British rule or any real continuity to it from ancient times. Rather it views India as a melting pot of invading cultures with no overriding political or cultural background or unity. It was Karl Marx who said that India has no history, and what is called history "is the record of successive intruders." This is the position still taken by Western Indologists and their counterparts in India, particularly Indian leftists who treat the words of Marx almost like a scripture. They fiercely resist the suggestion of any advanced indigenous civilization in India.

Western thought reads the same type of political and psychological motives into the Indic school of thought that it does for the history of Europe. It tries to understand the Indic tradition according to Marxism, Freud, Deconstructionism, or whatever may be the latest trend in western thought, as if these characteristic preoccupations of the outward looking western mind could unlock the keys to a very different yogic culture. In fact, these usually tell us more about the western mind than about India's traditions. Generally, the current western scholarship about India or about the ancient world as a whole naively follows the shifts of political and social correctness in western thought, as if all of history was to change

retrospectively along with the fluctuations of ideology in the West! In short, the West has not adequately questioned its approach for understanding Indic civilization or created a consistent model for viewing it at a spiritual or philosophical level. Not surprisingly, Indic civilization remains a mystery and the West does not appreciate the riches of the higher mind behind it.

Western intellectual culture is quite critical of the Indic tradition and rejects most of it as unscientific or erroneous. It styles Indic thought as mystical, irrational, superstitious or even absurd. We could, therefore, easily describe the main approach of Western Indology as one of negationism, denying something outright in order dispose of it altogether. This failure of Western Indology is nowhere more evident as in its treatment of the Vedas. The monumental literature of the Vedas—the largest of the ancient world and given a spiritual and cultural reverence throughout India throughout its history—is reduced to the record of illiterate invading hordes or pastoral nomads which really didn't deserve to be preserved. Vedic literature is not examined in depth but simply explained away by such negationist theories, as something of no consequence that need not be taken seriously.

Negation of Vedic Literature

According to Western Indology the Vedic is a literature that should not exist, that if it does exist is primitive, distorted or deceptive. Whatever appears sophisticated in the Vedas becomes an interpolation or a cynical borrowing from indigenous people that the Vedic people supplanted and denigrated (in other words, blaming the negationism on the Vedic people themselves!). Western Indology first viewed Vedic literature as the record of invading/militant Aryan hordes from Central Asia as they destroyed the sophisticated Dravidian urban culture of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Now that the Harappan culture has been shown to have not ended in violence but in geological and river changes, they haven't given up their old views but simply modified them, without even acknowledging their previous distortions. They now see the Vedas as the record of a pastoral culture that gradually infiltrated its way into India after 1500 BCE and, in some unknown way, subverted the language and literature of the land, though no real evidence for this or record of it has remained.

Such views do not explain the Vedic literature, its extent, sophistication or continuity. Ruthless hordes would not produce such a literature or be able to continue it through the centuries. Pastoral infiltrators would be less able to do so. No subcontinent would carry on such a vast literature as a great spiritual legacy that represents small groups of intrusive peoples that

had no real civilization! To carry on such a vast literature, particularly one that requires very elaborate and expensive rituals, would require a royal patronage and from an early period.

There is a similar negationism about Harappan civilization, which is also left in the dark. Harappan civilization is viewed as a mysterious civilization that came and went leaving no real trace in the later culture. That it was the largest and most sophisticated urban culture of the ancient world at the time is similarly downplayed. Rather the impression is given that it was only a sidelight to smaller Near Eastern cultures that were the real center of civilization at the time. Its obvious connections to Vedic thought found in artifacts and symbols like the swastika, the Om symbol and fire altars are stubbornly ignored. In making the Harappan a so-called Dravidian culture, the fact that there is no archaeological record, history or trace of a movement of Dravidians south to confirm this change is similarly ignored.

Vedic literature does represent the Indic tradition from ancient times. It is the most ancient literature that India as a culture chose to perpetuate and which nearly all later literatures in the country refer to, including non-Vedic groups or thinkers. We cannot ignore Vedic literature or place it in Central Asia. We cannot pretend that it has no connection or origin in India by ignoring references to Indian geography flora and fauna in the

Rigveda itself. Even today many great Indian thinkers draw inspiration from the Rigveda itself, including such great figures as Sri Aurobindo, who established an entire new modern school of Vedic interpretation.

Harappan urban culture similarly represents the urban aspect of Indic civilization since ancient time. We cannot pretend that it had no literature and no continuity of its culture and peoples in the region. Nor can we pretend that it could have been entirely forgotten by the existent Vedic literature. The literature record and urban ruins—though very different sources of information that will give different points of view—cannot be kept apart. The continuity of Indic civilization and its literature cannot be negated away. We cannot place the ancient literature of India outside of India and understand the development of Indian civilization.

The other aspect of Western Indology that is yet more questionable is its holding on to wrong views even after they have been disproved. To date the most common impression people have about ancient India—from textbooks and depictions all over the world—is Wheeler's massacre at Mohenjodaro and the image of the invading Aryan hordes like the later Huns and Mongols. See for example the entry on Mohenjodaro in the Encyclopedia Britannica for the perpetuation of this distortion, which no Western Indologist has complained about. Though Western Indologists if pressed acknowledge that this view is wrong and that Harappan

culture declined and fell without such outside invasion and violence, they have done nothing significant to change these distortions. They seem to absolve themselves of any responsibility for them or the political and social problems that their misinterpretations have caused or aggravated. However, they are outraged if Hindus should question their record or their motives.

Wholesale Negation of Indic Civilization

This negationism of Indian civilization is not just a matter of the Vedas or the Aryan Invasion Theory. That merely sets the precedent for a negation of the India's civilization as a whole. The same predictable pattern repeats itself in other areas of culture. It is not only ancient India but all aspects of Indic civilization that are questionable. The logic is simple. Everything in Indian civilization came from migrants from the West (like the Aryan Invasion), borrowings from the West (like from the Greeks in ancient times), is inferior to that of the West (Hindu monism being at best a crude approach to Christian monotheism), or is simply not of any value at all (Indic spirituality or Puranic occultism as fantasy, mythology, error or superstition). Whatever limited indigenous tradition there might have been gets reduced to some mysterious Harappan, Dravidian culture that was erased by the intrusive Aryans or taken

over by them without affording the natives any credit in the process. This means that Indic civilization if it is indigenous to any significant degree remains fraudulent!

Puranic records of a hundred kings before the time of Buddha are dismissed as fanciful, even though names for one major dynasty, that of the Ikshvakus, and years of reign going back well over a thousand years prior to the Buddha, are recorded. For reconstructing any authentic history of India, Western Indologists rely on happenstance Greek, Chinese and Islamic travelers (who had their own religious and political motives), refusing to accept anything from Indians themselves. That such visitors are often quite unreliable is ignored (like trusting Spanish accounts of New World cultures). And when the records of these travelers do support the antiquity or sophistication of Indian civilization, they are ignored, like failing to give any credibility to Megasthenes's statement that India had a tradition that went back many thousands of years before Alexander.

Relative to the culture of ancient India, its negation by Western Indologists is almost total. For sculpture, which was particularly important for the iconic temple worship in India, we are told that what was of any value in it came from the Greeks after the time of Alexander. That Harappan statues are quite sophisticated and realistic and could represent indigenous influences is

ignored. Later sculpture like that of South Indian temples is dismissed as inferior to that of Europe or as unrealistic in its depictions.

Relative to the tradition of drama, which was quite important in India, we are told that it derives from a Greek influence because the Greeks had great dramas (though lacking in the spiritual and yogic style of the Indians), again though there is no Indian recollection of such a Greek influence. For poetry, we are told that the classical Sanskrit poetry of such as Kalidasa is artificial, sterile and unrealistic, though it is highly spiritual, very musical and quite sophisticated. We are told that it can’t compare with that of the Greeks and Romans, much less Shakespeare! Great Indian traditions of music and dance, said to go back to the Sama Veda, are generally ignored as not of much value in world music and as probably an invention of recent centuries, at most meriting a short footnote!

Relative to science, most of Indian science, particularly astronomy, is reduced to borrowings from the Greeks, though Indian astronomy and mathematics follow different lines. Indians did not need the Greeks to bring them Babylonian astronomy, as such scholars state. They had contact with that region long before Alexander and generally influenced the Middle East more than it did India. Ayurvedic medicine is similarly thought to owe a lot to the Greeks, though Ayurveda has clear Vedic roots.

We must remember that India archaeologically speaking has a history of a great civilizations going back three thousand years before the time of Alexander. Alexander's so-called conquest of India, which was more of a raid, was not even mentioned in historical records of India. Greek rulers in the third and second century BC were mentioned, but not considered extraordinary. Clearly, Alexander's supposed influence on India is exaggerated out of proportion to reality. There was certainly no great adulation of Greek culture as better than that of India, though Greek contributions in the field of astronomy were recognized. On the contrary, the Greeks spoke highly of the civilization of India. Megasthenes, who came to India about the time of Alexander, in the fragments of his Indika that remain records and Indian tradition of 153 kings going back over 6400 years. Clearly, India had a sense of tremendous antiquity for its civilization when the Greeks came. They didn't see the Greeks as their superiors, as we do, nor did the Greeks themselves.
Relative to religious literature, we are told that Vedic prayers and metaphors cannot compare with the psalms of the Bible in terms of sensitivity or sophistication. For philosophy, there has been a desire to reduce Upanishadic thought to a Greek influence, even though history does not support that. Still a Greek borrowing is suspected. For spirituality, we are told that Yoga, Vedanta and Buddhism are inferior to western

monotheism and its greater sense of compassion and that their claims of spiritual realization are either religiously or psychologically suspect. This is in spite of the fact that western mystics like Meister Eckhart sound more like Hindu Vedantists than like Catholics, and though the ancient Greeks looked up to the Indians for their spiritual wisdom. Though devotion is emphasized in Vedic texts and in the Gita itself, we are told that the Hindu devotional tradition (Bhakti Yoga) owes a lot to Christians and Muslims, though these religions do not have such yogic paths, understand yogic states of consciousness, or practice a similar temple worship as in India! Similarly, we are told that Hatha Yoga postures are an invention of at most a thousand years in India, though the same postures are clearly depicted on Harappan seals!

What we are dealing with, therefore, is an unprecedented and total negation of an entire civilization. Western Indology does not present India as having an indigenous civilization comparable to that of China, Europe or the Middle East, but as having little cultural, religious, historical or political unity of its own. This is in spite of the fact that the vast Sanskrit literature contains extensive related systems of religion, spirituality, philosophy, medicine, art and literature going back to the Roman era, if not long before—something that no other civilization has been able to maintain. India is put on par with Africa or

America by way of civilization and religion, as a half tribal culture. It is not regarded as having an equivalent, though different civilization in terms of art, science or religion to the West.

However, there is another view of India that has honored its great and spiritual civilization. Western intellectuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth century—including great thinkers like Voltaire, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Emerson and Thoreau—waxed eloquently about the spiritual philosophies and traditions of India, even the greatness of the Brahmin class. They were followed the Theosophists in the later nineteenth century, with leaders like Annie Besant in the early twentieth century who was an important leader in the independence movement in India itself. Today the large New Age movement in the West has an important, if not central place for Indian gurus, Yoga traditions and healing practices. Indeed, the western popular mind has always been enamoured of the image of mystical India, the land of Gods and sages. In addition, many modern scientists like Oppenheimer and Einstein have noted their philosophical affinity with India and the East for their new models of unity and consciousness behind the universe. Historians like Toynbee had similar views. The problem is that such groups have been a minority and have not determined the manner in which India and its civilization are usually viewed today.

So clearly, the problem is not a deficiency or prejudice of the western mind as a whole, but one in certain parts of academia and various vested interests. There is a common ground for a new view of India and an integration between East and West, once we move beyond such biases and recognize these other East-West connections that have existed throughout history.

Incapacity of Western Indology

The real question, therefore, is—why is Western Indology, with all its supposed academic rigor, is so inherently incapable of understanding India or its traditions? I think that the answer is simple. Western Indologists have not confronted the Indic tradition directly. They look at Indic traditions as fossils or museum pieces and haven't entered into Indian thoughts and practices, though these are available to them if they wish. Their very academic rigor, which trains them only in an external view of the world, becomes a barrier to the type of interior civilization which India represents. They lack the necessary spiritual and yogic vision to make sense of Indic civilization. They lack the mindset and the tools for the job, which requires spiritual insight and not mere logic or pottery gathering. Worse yet, they are not even aware of their limitations in this respect.

The reasons for this incapacity to understand India are reflected in a general incapacity to understand non-western cultures. Western Indologists still see western civilization as world civilization. They do not recognize any real independent Indic civilization apart from that of the West. As in their eyes, civilization per se comes from the West, any civilization in India must have western roots or otherwise be questionable.
We note that textbooks of world history to the present day are mainly textbooks of western history, with a few footnotes thrown in to represent the rest of the world. Textbooks of world art are mainly textbooks of western art; textbooks of world philosophy are mainly textbooks of western philosophy, and so on with all the different fields of knowledge and culture. Non-western cultures are recognized in world civilization to the extent that they represent western type cultural aspirations towards science, democracy (self-determination), economic development or monotheism, the characteristics of western civilizations, not for any unique cultures of their own. Because western historians believe that western history represents the main trend in world history, they are naturally inclined to see the origins of world history and that of western history as the same. Not surprisingly, they compulsive reduce or modify historical data to fit into this preconceived mold.

There is no doubt that Greco-Roman culture is the origin of most western philosophical, political and scientific thought. There is similarly no doubt that the Near East is the origin of most western religious thought through the Judeo-Christian tradition and its Egyptian and Mesopotamian connections. But Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian or Mesopotamian origins cannot be ascribed to the civilizations of South and East Asia, Africa and America or that of world civilization as a whole. Western civilization may in fact represent a sidelight, not the main stream of world civilization that is more spiritual in nature.

That Western Indologists may be offended if their methodology or qualifications to judge the Indic tradition are questioned only highlights their inability to approach it in an objective manner. They can negate an entire civilization but are intolerant of accepting any fundamental criticism of their approach in turn. That Western Indology might be questioned is only natural in the post-colonial age, which has exposed many Eurocentric/materialist models as biased. Presently, western scholars are resisting the new Hindu historical scholarship, though it has much hard data behind it, because it questions their views on a political and philosophical level. This is contrary to how they have handled the challenge of other regions of former colonial rule.

Black Africans and other indigenous groups have questioned and thrown off such nineteenth century based interpretations of their history. While initially western scholars denigrated these new indigenous views of Black History, they have now come to accept them or at least afford them a place, including creating their own departments in western universities. The difference is that anti-African and anti-Black views have been thrown out as politically incorrect, while anti-Hindu views are still regarded as politically correct and largely unquestioned. While western scholars are sensitive to the charge of racism and critical of colonial views of history in regards to Africa, they are still perpetuating the colonial view of India.

Indic View of Western Civilization

Meanwhile, western thinkers don't understand the very different view of civilization found inside the Indic tradition. Indic thinkers are not so impressed by western civilization and its supposed greatness, though they might admire the West on some points. Modern Indian sages have been equally hard on western civilization. Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha, Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore—in fact, most modern Indian gurus criticize the West for a lack of true spirituality and any real yogic path to develop higher consciousness. Almost every Indian spiritual teacher

who has addressed western civilization has expressed misgivings about the underlying values or lack of values behind it. Certainly, no great spiritual teachers of modern India would equate western civilization with world civilization. On the contrary, they usually find it to be a deviation, perhaps necessary, from the longer and more enduring spiritual occupations of humanity that were common not only to India but to all ancient cultures. They look back to the Upanishadic vision that long ago showed the limitations of materialistic culture. "Living in the midst of ignorance, considering themselves to be wise and learned, they wander like the blind led by the blind. The goal does not appear to these heedless children, deluded by the lure of wealth. Thinking there is nothing beyond this world, they fall again and again into the power of Death (Katha Upanishad II.5-6)."

Indic thinkers find the sages in their own tradition—Vedic rishis, Vedantic sages or great yogis—to be deeper and more profound than the Greek philosophers, modern scientists or monotheistic theologians. From them a Vasishta, Yajnavalkya, Shankara or Patanjali represents a higher mind than an Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas or Kant. Indic thinkers aren't overwhelmed by the greatness of modern science and technology, which they see as limited outer preoccupations, but look to a greater science of consciousness that does not rely on instruments. They

don’t find western art, which has an ego base and sensate approach, to be superior to Indian art and its spiritual/religious orientation. They don’t find western consumerism to be an enlightened economy but to only hide a deeper spiritual poverty. They don’t find modern democracies and their human rights orientation to be really cognizant of the rights and duties of soul or our rights and duties to the universe.

Indic thinkers aren’t impressed by the ability of western scholars to grasp the Indic tradition, or all the gyrations they do to keep the origin of the Vedas out of India. And such thinkers are not bigoted or unintelligent for doing so, nor have they failed to seriously examine western civilization. They simply have different values and a different sense of culture, consciousness and reality than mainstream western culture. Yet they are not alone in their views, many western mystics have expressed similar critiques of western civilization, and much of the western counterculture has as well.

Intellectual Clash of Cultures

This entire issue reflects a clash of civilizations. Western Indology is part of western civilization, shares its values and naturally works to expand its frontiers on an intellectual level. Western Indology is an attempt to mold and fit Indic civilization into the terms and values of western civilization. Western Indology has yet to

accept Indic civilization as a spiritual, philosophical and historical tradition of its own value and independence, with its own authenticity. It has not really confronted the Indic tradition, much less acknowledged it as an equal. Western Indology looks down upon the Indic tradition from on high, from its ivory tower, dissecting, fragmenting and denigrating the civilization of India according to its own alien values and views.

The best thing for Western Indologists to do would be to start over afresh. They should first recognize that Indic civilization is a tradition much older, broader and more spiritual than the western tradition and independent from it as well. Indic civilization is not necessarily hostile to western civilization but it does proceed by different values and according to a different perception of humanity, nature and the universe, apart which we cannot make sense of it.

The best thing for Indians and those who follow Indic traditions is to go directly to their own traditions not only on a spiritual level but also relative to culture and history and not give much credence to Western Indology as it is today. We see a renaissance of the Indic tradition in the world today on a spiritual, yogic, philosophical and culture levels. The popularity of Yoga, Vedanta, Buddhism, Ayurveda and Indian music all over the world shows this. This in the long run is a more important event with a longer lasting influence than Western Indology that has so far failed to enter the

courtyard, much less the sanctuary of the great temple of Indic civilization. Unfortunately, the views of Indologists still determine textbook accounts in schools, even in India, and influence the global media. Otherwise one could just as well ignore them as irrelevant.

Indic Effort to Spiritualize Western Civilization

The Indic tradition divides up western civilization into different areas, to which it ascribes different degrees of validity. It largely accepts western science as valid within its own sphere but regards that sphere as limited. For example, it accepts the findings of physics, particularly the discoveries of the relativity of time and space and the underlying reality of energy behind matter. However, it considers that these discoveries should be pursued further to get at the reality behind the universe, which is one of intelligence and consciousness.

The Indic tradition accepts western political ideals of democracy and equality as good ideas but undermined by a materialistic formulation. Our first need as human beings is a spiritual self-determination—the freedom to know ourselves and discover our true nature beyond the body and mind, free from political, commercial or economic constraints. Spiritual self-determination provides us the ability to stand above external

manipulation, to go beyond desire, greed and ego. Modern democracy allows mainly for a material self-determination. This does not bring true freedom but makes the masses vulnerable to manipulation by commercial, political and religious forces, which cater to their fears and desires. This is what we are seeing in the democratic West, which has almost a dictatorship of the media and the corporate world and very little individual or creative thinking about ultimate reality.

The Indic tradition does not accept that western views of history, society and spirituality are valid or complete. These are the main areas that it finds western civilization to be lacking. Above all, it cannot accept the equation of these western disciplines with science in terms of objectivity, finality or proof. Western social sciences, for example, remain culturally bound and cannot be given the finality of the physical sciences, which are also undergoing many changes. Western religions are still mired in medieval and regressive concepts of exclusive truth and the need to convert the world and are yet more questionable.

The Indic tradition is aiming at spiritualizing western civilization, which means accepting its validity particularly in the realm of science, but integrating that into a deeper spiritual view which accepts the spiritual sciences of Yoga and Vedanta as well. It can also honor the genuinely creative and spiritual aspects of western civilization and various individual western thinkers,

artists and mystics. The main conflict between the Indic and the western is their respective approaches to the humanities (history, social sciences and religion). The Indic tradition sees nothing of lasting value to be gained by subordinating itself to current western civilization or allowing that to define and delimit it, reducing it to a mere sidelight to western culture. The Indic tradition sees itself as closer to true world civilization, which is also cosmic civilization, and is one of spirituality and Self-realization, not of mere mastery of the external world.

Part II.8

The Need to Rewrite Indian History

History is Always Being Rewritten

In recent years, the government of India and several state governments have decided to revise history books, particularly relative to the ancient period, bringing up recent data that calls into question the Aryan invasion and the many theories that have arisen from it. Over the past few decades numerous archaeological finds have been made throughout North India, considerably widening the civilization of the region and uncovering its continuity through time, rendering the Aryan Invasion idea obsolete.

Quite predictably, leftists in India raised a cry of tampering with history, as if history is a fixed science that cannot be adjusted. The fact is that history books in India still largely teach the British view of India from the colonial era and have not changed much since the independence of the country over fifty years ago. The only exception is history books in Marxist states like Bengal that have been rewritten in a communist slant, which is even more against the traditions of the country than the British view.

History books are always being rewritten and they should be, as new information comes in and our

understanding of culture widens. This does not mean that history should carelessly be rewritten to suit an ideology, as in communist Russia or in Nazi Germany, but that we must not turn old accounts of history into an unalterable dogma. History is not a material science like physics that deals with hard facts and even physics textbooks are continually being updated. The West has often tried to give its version of history the finality of science, but political changes since the end of the colonial era have revealed the biases behind its accounts, particularly of Africa and Asia. The western account of history cannot be given the finality of the physical sciences and should be expected to change radically over time.

Colonial Distortions of History East and West

Up to two decades ago, the history of America was taught as the wanton aggression of the Native Americans, the so-called Red Indians, on the gentle white settlers who simply wanted to farm and raise their families in a wide land that had room for many people. This was the predominant view of Christians and of educated Europeans in America. The real history was one of the genocide of native peoples and their cultures in a greed for land and power. The so-called savages honored all treaties. The so-called civilized white man didn’t honor any.

The European history of Africa followed similar prejudices, with the native blacks as uncivilized barbarians that had to be civilized by the white Europeans. That the blacks did have venerable and rich old cultures and were really the target of exploitation and genocide was covered over. The same phenomenon occurred throughout the colonial world, including Asia, where native peoples were subjugated and their cultures denigrated. Like the blacks, some Asians were turned into slaves or serfs, uprooted from their land and taken to foreign countries and commercially exploited. This was also done in the name of civilizational advancement through Christianity and European culture. That is how over a million Indians ended up in the Caribbean in Trinidad and Guyana.

The European treatment of India was the same as that of America and Africa, starting with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, who brought the cruel ways of the Inquisition to India. The Indian mutiny of 1857 occurred because the British brought in aggressive and intolerant missionaries and had the country in the grip of a cruel economic exploitation. Yet such oppression has been left out of the history of India as told by the Europeans and independent India has not rewritten the record adequately. Similarly, the destruction wrought during the Islamic period, which was worse than the British period in terms of religious and economic exploitation as well as genocide, has been similarly

ignored or downplayed so as not to offend minority communities.

Yet can one seriously imagine—given all the colonial distortions of history worldwide which are only slowly being removed today—that no real revision of the history of India needs to be made? Can we believe that somehow by luck, in spite of their prejudices, that colonial and European scholars got the history of India right and wrote it without any distortion or bias in their favor, though they failed everywhere else?

Liberals and leftists in America sympathize with the native cultures of Africa and America and their need not only for correcting historical accounts but also for restoration for historical wrongs. But, strangely, leftists in India still vaunt the colonial view that India was uncivilized before the British and denigrate their own native traditions!

When ancient historical finds are made in China, as with the uncovering of the tomb of the first emperor dating to the third century BCE, there is great national pride even among the communists. But all the massive finds of the Harappan/Sarasvati culture, as well as the retracing of the once great Sarasvati River, bring no pride to the leftist-secular intellectuals of India. They would ignore these, dismiss them as an invention of Hindu communalists, or imagine that they represent an unknown civilization that vanished mysteriously with no real connection to the later traditions of the region!

Though the Vedic literature is the largest of the ancient world by all accounts, Indian leftists will have no pride in it and seek to denigrate it as best they can. Though the Mahabharata at over two thousand years old is the world's oldest and longest national epic, Indian leftists don't even want it taught in the schools (even when the common people find great pride in watching the Mahabharata on television).

In this regard, we should remember that Marxism and communism in India are largely anti-national movements. Marxists in India sided with China against India during the Indo-Chinese war of 1962 and raised no criticism of China for its attack. They sided with the British during the independence movement. This is a stark contrast to communism in Russia, China and Vietnam in which were part of larger nationalistic movements. This is because Indian Marxists came mainly from a British Marxist background and did not participate in anti-colonial struggles, as did the followers of Mao and Ho-chi-minh. They were largely intellectuals from wealthy families, educated in England, not workers in the field, much less freedom fighters.

Actually the distortion of history has been done intentionally by many modern Indian historians, particularly covering over historical wrongs against Hindus. They believe that by correcting history that the present can be changed. They pretend that the

generally cruel Muslim rule in India was benign and secular so that this account will serve to make modern Hindus and Muslims more benign and secular and help them bury the past. But the opposite is true. If a nation does not face its true history, it has no future and its present remains confused. This would be like American historians pretending that Native Americans (Red Indians) were treated well through history and that accounts of their oppression and genocide were false or exaggerated, so as to bring harmony to the two communities today. This would only allow old prejudices to continue.

India has not faced its past in order not to offend certain minorities in the country who may still harbor anti-nationalist sentiments. It has also been intentionally done in order to prevent the majority community from awakening to its colonial and religious oppression, fearing this would increase communal disharmony, even though distortions caused by this, like the image of Hindus as barbaric idolaters, continue in the world media today. The result is that the country lacks a genuine national pride and a sense of its continuity to ancient times.

History and Nationalism

One of the main purposes of history books, as taught in different countries in the world, is to instill a sense of

national pride and honor—in short to inculcate a sense of patriotism and nationalism. Whether it is the United States, Great Britain, Russia, Germany or China, this is certainly the case today and has been so as long as these countries have existed as modern nations. The lives of great leaders, particularly the founders of the country are highlighted, the continuity of the nation's history is emphasized, and the importance of the nation in the history of the world and the greatness of the national culture are stressed. Students are expected to come away from reading accounts of their history with a sense of national greatness and purpose, not only for the past but also for the future.

However, India is a strange and unique country in which history books are often anti-national in nature. India has largely kept in tact the British approach to Indian history devised in the colonial era. Students of such textbooks come away apologetic or confused about their country and its traditions. Textbooks in Marxist ruled states of India like Bengal and Kerala leave their students with a sense of the greatness of communism and communist countries like China or even Russia which is no longer communist, rather than any real regard for India and its great traditions.

History books in India try to ignore the dominant Hindu ethos of the country and its history before the Islamic period. India's greatest historical and cultural document, the Mahabharata, is hardly given any

attention in the schools. So too, the Vedas, Ramayana, Puranas, Buddhist Jatakas and other prime historical and cultural documents of the country are ignored because of their religious overtones. If they do address India as a nation, it is only India of the independence movement that they acknowledge, as if prior to 1947 India did not really exist. While Nehru is made important, older kings from the Rig Vedic Bharatas to Yudishthira of the Mahabharata period to the Marathas of the eighteenth century are hardly mentioned. There is no real sense of any historical continuity to the culture, much less to the country. While Mahatma Gandhi is emphasized, the greater spiritual traditions of India and its great teachers from the Vedic rishis, Vedantic, Buddhist and Jain sages to modern savants like Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi is not given much attention.

It is true that history should not be a mere instrument of a destructive nationalism and should avoid instilling aggression against other lands and peoples, even when upholding what is valuable in a nation's history. But this does not require that the national value of historical studies is negated altogether.

The question, therefore, is how the history accounts in India can be made to reflect and instill a genuine nationalism and sense of the country's history and destiny. India, after all, is one of the great civilizations of the world, with cultural traditions that have much

value for humanity. Such historical accounts must reflect the richness and diversity of Indic civilization, but they cannot ignore its unity and continuity either.

The fact is that you cannot build a nation without creating history books that instill a positive nationalism, particularly in the youth. The real danger in India is not the arising of a chauvinistic nationalism like that of Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy—which are foreign to the mentality and ethos of the country—but a lack of national spirit and historical consciousness that keeps people alienated from their roots and the country divided.

India needs a real nationalism and for this a national sense of history, pride and purpose is required. A true Indian nationalism will be rooted in an Indian ethos of dharma, spirituality and pluralism, but this does not mean there can be no national or historical pride without encouraging communalism in the country. On the contrary, a greater sense of national identity would be the best thing to counter the disintegrating influence of religious, castist and regional interests that are bringing the country down.

Therefore we must ask: Why can't Indians connect India's traditional ancient literature, the Vedas, with its archaeology through Harappa and the many Sarasvati river sites? Why can't Indians find national pride in their own history both on literary and archaeological levels? Why should history in India be used for national shame,

rather than national pride? Why should the history of India place Indic civilization out of India? These are questions that must be answered.

Western and Indic Views of History

The subject of history in the western context is a very different than in the Indian context. In the western view, history is mainly an account of political events and economic progress, a purely outward affair. In the Hindu view, history is a means of teaching detachment, showing how great kings and kingdoms come and go in the course of time. It has an inner value as a spiritual teaching about the nature of human life and the need for liberation from worldly concerns. In the western view, history is progressive from the crude beginnings of agriculture and village life moving forward to the present day urban culture. In the Hindu view, history is cyclical, with various cultures coming and going over time as the soul seeks liberation from the phenomenal world.

The western progressive account of history is quite flawed. For example, the first civilizations of the ancient world that we can document—including Egypt, Sumeria, India and China—did not regard themselves as the first but were aware of many cultures and kingdoms before them, particularly prior to a great flood. The civilizations that we regard as the first saw themselves

as very old with many antecedents! Yet we pretend that there was nothing before them! In addition, the civilizations of the Third Millennium BCE, like those of Egypt and Harappan/Sarasvati India, had better urban and architectural achievements than those that followed for many centuries. Even Europe had its Dark Ages after the Roman period in which much knowledge was lost. This idea of history as linear progress is clearly not the case. While humanity has progressed scientifically, this is mainly over the past five hundred years. On the other hand, we see a spiritual decline since ancient times, and over the last century we can note a decline in culture, art, music and philosophy in Europe itself, coinciding or even caused by great advances in science.

As India is the only civilization of antiquity to survive the onslaught of time, it is the special responsibility of Indians to discover not only their history but also that of the entire ancient world. Just as there are unquestioned distortions of ancient India, similar distortions of other ancient cultures also exist. For example, the religion of ancient Egypt, which like that of the Vedas demonstrates much occult and spiritual significance, is similarly dismissed as polytheism, idolatry or henotheism (worshipping different Gods as the supreme God), exactly like the Vedas. Revamping the way history is taught in Indian schools would be a major step in the direction of a more authentic and

spiritual sensitive history of the world. It is a scientific and spiritual imperative, not only for India but for all countries.

Part II.9

The Indian or Bharatiya Ideal of Education

To people all over the world India reflects an image of Yoga, spirituality and mysticism as the main characteristics of its culture. Strangely, these are precisely the aspects of Indian culture that are not adequately taught in public education in India because of the western model of education that the country follows. For this reason Indians educated in India, especially at western oriented institutions, are becoming ignorant of their own historical culture and its great spiritual wisdom. There is sometimes more of this taught in American universities than in at universities in India.

Modern Education

Modern educational systems derive from western culture and reflect the dichotomy between science and religion that has arisen historically within it. Science is viewed as a secular pursuit that should be part of education for everyone. Religion is looked upon as a special belief or dogma that is a private or personal matter, outside the scope of secular education.

While science is regarded as a way of knowledge, religion is regarded as a way of faith, including faith in things that are unscientific or irrational like the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ. While efforts to reconcile science and religion have been attempted, most scientists tend to agnosticism or atheism, or to forms of mysticism that are unorthodox. Fundamentalist religious groups, on the other hand, commonly oppose science or would at least like to see it restricted.

Even in America today, thought to be a progressive country, fundamentalist Christians continue to protest against teaching the theory of evolution in the schools because it is not in harmony with the Bible and its six thousand-year scheme of creation. While we may laugh at such groups as a minority or an anachronism, they are large in numbers in many places and hold considerable financial resources. They are also spearheading powerful missionary movements throughout the world, including into India.

For science to emerge in the West it had to endure for centuries the wrath of the church and the Inquisition. Many scientists were suppressed, tortured or even killed before science could free itself from the rule of religious dogma. This conflict left its mark on the western psyche. Meanwhile western religion has viewed science and secular education as promoting an anti-religious, if not immoral way of life. Many western religious groups blame secular education for all the

social problems in the West from crime and abortion to drugs and homosexuality. Many fundamentalists put their own children in special religious schools to

avoid exposure to these secular dangers. This often leads to confusion and personality problems when these children grow up and are faced with the real world.

Therefore, western education places a distinction if not conflict between science and religion. If it teaches about religion it is mainly relative to its political, cultural or historical implications. The dichotomy of liberal science versus dogmatic religion, or between moral religion and immoral or unspiritual science has yet to be resolved in the western mind.

Religion and Science in Classical India

Classical India never had this dichotomy between science and religion. First of all it looked upon religion mainly as a way of knowledge, a vidya or veda, a way of seeing, a philosophy or darshana. Educated people in the Indic tradition look at religion as a pursuit of self-knowledge and self-realization as in the philosophies of Yoga, Vedanta and Buddhism. They classified knowledge into para and apara—inner and outer. They saw no conflict between the two, only their scope was different.

Many western thinkers have debated whether Indic religions are really religions at all for this very reason. The answer is both yes and no. They are religions in that they teach us about the immortal and eternal aspect of reality. They are not religions in the sense that they are not based upon dogma, faith or the need to convert. The western mind conditioned either to science as not spiritual, or religion as dogmatic has been unable to understand the Indian mind, which sees the highest science and the highest spirituality as the same. This approach, which shows us how to bring science and spirituality together, is perhaps the greatest gift that the Indian mind can offer to the West.

Indic religion has always been pluralistic. It recognizes that many paths must exist relative to the different levels and temperaments of individuals. It never had the idea of only one true faith for all, but rather as many paths as there are individuals. An all-knowing or all-powerful church and its infallible pronouncements never dominated it. Its religions never had a political machinery that enforced their beliefs through intimidation and torture. It never had a pope, a caliph, an inquisition or holy wars, though certainly episodes of intolerance did exist in the country.

The Indic mind, going back to the Upanishads of the pre-Buddhist era, recognizes two types of knowledge. The first or lower knowledge is that which deals with the outer world of name, form, and causation and is

necessary for our practical functioning in life. The second or higher knowledge is that dealing with consciousness, the nameless, formless and transcendent, which reveals our ultimate or eternal reality. The Indic mind regarded the second or higher knowledge as more important, but it didn't regard the first or outer knowledge as wrong, to be suppressed, or incapable of harmonization with the higher knowledge. In fact, the great rishis saw even the lower knowledge as sacred and as following similar laws and principles as the higher knowledge. For this reason a text like the Vedas could be used as the basis for medicine or astronomy as well as for Yoga and meditation. Art was also regarded as sacred, including in its portrayal of the human body and the world of nature.

However, the Indic mind did not regard these different darshanas, religions or ways of knowledge as necessarily the same or without contradiction. They were viewed like different scientific theories that could be proved or disproved or, like the difference between Newtonian and Quantum physics, which might be true on one level but not on another. They were not looked upon as religious dogmas that were beyond question. The different systems could be debated rationally or explored through meditation. They did not require wars or conversion efforts to resolve their differences, nor a doctrine of faith to circumvent any need for proof. And

their texts could be revised in the light of new knowledge.
The coexistence of several different systems was considered helpful, a richness of various points of view that elevated the culture and stimulated the intelligence of individuals. After all, life itself is filled with diversity, if not contradiction. There is no one food for everyone, no only one tree that can provide wood, no only one mountain to climb, and even the ocean though one has innumerable waves and diverse coastlines.

Western Education in India

Western education was introduced into India through foreign rulers. Islamic education emphasizing the Koran brought in the idea of only one scripture and of a last prophet who possessed the final word of God. European missionaries brought in the idea of Christ and the Bible as supreme. The British brought in modern western education, with its science versus religion dichotomy that became dominant after Darwin in the nineteenth century. After independence public schools in India continued the modern western model, while Islamic institutions (madrasahs) were allowed to keep teaching the way they had been doing, sometimes going back to the seventeenth century.

Followers of western religions in India obviously cannot easily reconcile themselves to the Indic view of religions as different ways of knowledge as part of a pluralistic approach to reality. This goes against the currents of exclusivism and supremacy in their faiths.

Those who follow a modern scientific approach also have problems with the Indic view of spiritual sciences like astrology because these are not easily verifiable like the physical sciences. Spiritual sciences can be verified, but require a different angle of approach in which consciousness comes into the picture, just as modern physics now requires it of physical laws. As science begins to look for consciousness as the ultimate ground of the universe, it is moving toward a greater spiritual science with an affinity to the Indic view of science. Modern science is also creating two levels of knowledge, mundane (in which the ordinary laws of physics work) and transcendent (in which these laws no longer apply).

Those who value the classical Indian model of education, which includes spiritual knowledge like Yoga and Vedanta, feel that the western educational model destroys much of what is truly significant in their traditions. The western educational model is not appropriate for India and cannot serve the spiritual and cultural heritage that is India's real gift to the world. India does not need to follow the western educational model any more than it should follow western models

of economics or dress. In fact as long as it does the country is likely to drift in uncertainty, like a person who has forgotten who he really is.

Even the West is moving away from institutional models of education towards a more intimate instruction that resembles the gurukula system. Real education depends upon personal instruction, not state run schools that mass-produce students like industrial products with nationally uniform curriculums and government dispensed funding. Private and New Age schools in the West look for a reintegration of consciousness and spirituality into education, as was the basis of the old Indic system.

The Challenge for the Future

The challenge for the coming century—for India to revive itself as a nation and a culture—is to recreate the Indic model of education in which the dichotomy between science and religion is resolved. The West must also do this or be condemned to a dichotomy of an immoral science versus irrational religion that will keep its culture imbalanced. We must move beyond not only dogmatic and exclusive religions on one hand, but also materialistic science on the other. Belief in materialism is also a form of dogma. We must recreate religion as a form of science and science as a form of spirituality.

The key to this is to place both science and religion as part of a pursuit of consciousness, not the imposition of external ideas, attitudes or beliefs. It is to promote a new critical thinking and creative intelligence that is not bound to religious revelation, on one hand, or to a naïve belief in physical reality, on the other. On a practical level this means that the spiritual heritage of India—the Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga, and Buddhism—must be taught in the schools as an integral part not only of Indian culture but of the global heritage of spiritual sciences. Sanskrit, the language that is the vehicle for most of these great teachings, must also be given emphasis.

Just as Europe honors its scientists, intellectual and artists, so India must honor its great thinkers in the spiritual realm. The insights of Indian sages from Vedic rishis to modern sages like Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi are among the greatest achievements of humanity that the western world, with its more outward based mentality, has yet to reach.

But it is not enough to impose an Indic form of education from above, by government decree. The intelligentsia of the country must see the need and rally behind it. This requires a new intelligentsia in India that goes back to Indic models and ceases to imitate western models of thinking. It also requires that the religious institutions, temples and ashrams offer classes on Vedic science, Hindu culture and their modern

adaptation. Even overseas Hindus are quick to build temples but slow to start schools, though their main complaint is that their children are losing their culture! They should not forget the educational heritage that is more important to the vitality of the Indic tradition than any God or guru.

Part II.10

The Myth of the Hindu Right

In media accounts today, any group that identifies itself as Hindu or tries to promote any Hindu cause is immediately and uncritically defined as ‘right-winged’. In the leftist accounts that commonly come from the Indian press, Hindu organizations are also routinely called militants and fascists. However, if we look at their actual views, Hindu groups have a very different ideology and practices than the political right in other countries. In fact many Hindu causes are more at home in the left in the West than in the right.

The whole idea of the ‘Hindu right’ is a ploy to discredit the Hindu movement as backward and prevent people from really examining it. The truth is that the Hindu movement is a revival of a native spiritual tradition that has nothing to do with the political right-wing of any western country. Its ideas are spiritually evolutionary, not politically regressive, though such revivals do have a few extremists. Let us examine the different aspects of the Hindu movement and where they would fall in the political spectrum of left and right as usually defined in the West.

Hinduism and Native Traditions

The Hindu cause is similar to the causes of native and tribal peoples all over the world, like native American and African groups. Even Hindu concerns about cultural encroachment by western religious and commercial interests mirrors those of other traditional peoples who want to preserve their cultures. Yet while the left has taken up the concerns of native peoples worldwide, the same concerns of Hindus are styled right-wing or communal, particularly in India!

When native Americans ask for a return of their sacred sites, the left in America supports them. When Hindus ask for a similar return of their sacred sites, the left in India opposes them and brands them as intolerant for their actions! When native peoples in America or Africa protest against the missionaries for interfering with their culture, the left supports them. Yet when Hindus express the same sentiments, the left attacks them. Even the Hindu demand for rewriting the history of India to better express the value of their indigenous traditions is the same as what native Africans and Americans are asking for. Yet the left opposes this Hindu effort, while supporting African and American efforts of a similar nature.

In countries like America, native traditions are minorities and thereby afforded a special sympathy. Leftists in general tend to support minority causes and often lump together black African and native American causes as examples of the damage caused by racism

and colonialism. In India, a native tradition has survived the colonial period but as the tradition of the majority of the people. Unfortunately, the intellectual elite of India, though following largely a leftist orientation, has no sympathy for the country's own native tradition. They identify it as right-wing in order to express their hostility towards it. They try to portray it as a majority oppression of minorities, when it is the movement of a suppressed majority to regain its dignity.

Not surprisingly, the same leftists in India, who have long been allied to communist China, similarly style the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause as right-wing and regressive, though the Dalai Lama is honored by the American left. This should tell the reader about the meaning of right and left as political terms in India. When one looks at the Hindu movement as the assertion of a native tradition with a profound spiritual heritage, the whole perspective on it changes.

Hindu Economics

The Hindu movement in India in its most typical form follows a Swadeshi (own-country) movement like the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch. It emphasizes protecting the villages and local economies, building economic independence and self-reliance for the country. It resists corporate interference and challenges multinational interests, whether the bringing of fast

food chains to India, western pharmaceuticals or terminator seeds.

Such an economic policy was supported by Mahatma Gandhi with his emphasis on the villages, reflected in his characteristic usage of the spinning wheel. Its counterparts in the West are the groups that protest the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, these protest groups are generally classified as 'left-wing' by the international press.

The international press considers the economic right-wing to be the powers of the multinational corporations, particularly, the oil industry, which certainly are not the allies of Hindu economics. Clearly Hindu economics is more connected with the New Left in the West and has little in common with the right. The Republican right in America, with its corporate interests, would hardly take up the cause of Hindu economics either.

Meanwhile the BJP, the so-called Hindu nationalist party in India, has been responsible for much the economic liberalization if the country, sometimes even to the dismay of some votaries of Hindu economics. It has been the main opponent of the socialist policies of the previous Congress and left governments that had communist leanings. While such a movement is to the right in the political spectrum, the policies of the BJP are a movement towards western capitalism from the

left, they are not a movement from it to the right. At most they emulate a more open capitalist society as in the West but one that retains a dharmic background.

Hindu Ecology and Nature Concerns

Hindu groups are well known for promoting vegetarianism and animal rights, particularly the protection of cows. The Hindu religion as a whole honors the Divine in animals and recognizes that animals have a soul and will eventually achieve liberation. Hindu groups have tried to keep fast food franchises, which emphasize meat consumption, out of India. Such a movement would be part of consumer advocacy movements that are generally leftist or liberal causes in the West. Again it is hardly an agenda of the right-wing in America, which has a special connection to the beef industry; or to the right-wing worldwide, which has no real concern for animal rights and is certainly not interesting in spreading vegetarianism.

Hindus look upon nature as sacred, honoring the rivers and mountains as homes of deities. They stress the protection of Mother Earth, which they worship in the form of the cow. They have a natural affinity with the western ecology movement and efforts to protect animals, forests and wilderness areas. This is also hardly a right-wing agenda.

Hindu Religious Pluralism

The Hindu religion is a pluralistic tradition that accepts many paths, teachers, scriptures and teachings. One cannot be a Christian without accepting Christ or a Buddhist without accepting Buddha, but one can be a Hindu without accepting any single figure. In fact there are Hindus who may not follow Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Vishnu or other Hindu sages or deities and still count as Hindu.

Hindus have been at the forefront in arguing for the cause of religious diversity and the acceptance of pluralism in religion, rejecting the idea that any single religion alone can be true. This Hindu idea of religion—which is also subscribed to by so-called right wing Hindu groups like RSS—is obviously not part of the agenda of the religious right in the West. The American Christian right is still sending missionaries to the entire world in order to convert all people to Christianity, the only true religion. It is firmly fixed on one savior, one scripture and a rather literal interpretation of these. Yet when Hindus ask the pope to make a statement that truth can be found outside of any particular church or religion they are called right-wing and backwards, while the pope, who refuses to acknowledge the validity of Hindu, Buddhist or other Indic traditions, is regarded as liberal! Such pluralism in religious views is hardly a

cause for any right-wing movement in the world, but is also considered progressive, liberal, if not leftist (except in India).

Hinduism and Science

Unlike the religious right in the West, the Hindu movement is not against science or opposed to teaching evolution in the schools. Hinduism does promote occult and spiritual subjects like astrology, Ayurvedic medicine, Yoga or Vedanta, but these are the same basic teachings found in the New Age in the West, generally regarded as a liberal or leftist movement, not those of the religious right in the West. Many leaders of the Hindu movement are in fact scientists. For example, RSS leaders like former chief Rajinder Singh, or BJP leaders like Murli Manohar Joshi have also been professors of modern physics.

In fact we could compare Hinduism as a whole with the case of Ayurveda. Ayurveda as a form of mind-body medicine emphasizing the role of consciousness in health and disease is part of the alternative medicine movement in the West and considered to be progressive, while the medical establishment that emphasizes allopathy is regarded as conservative, if not right-wing. However, in India it is Ayurveda, because it is a tradition of the country, which is regarded as

backwards, while modern medicine is regarded as progressive.

The Hindu Movement and Caste

The Hindu right is often defined in the media in terms of caste, as favoring the upper castes over the lower castes. This is another distortion that is often intentional. Modern Hindu teachers have been at the forefront of removing caste. This includes great figures like Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Aurobindo. It includes major Hindu movements like the Arya Samaj, the largest Vedic movement in modern India, and the Swadhyaya movement.

The RSS, the largest so-called Hindu right wing group, rejects caste and works to remove it from Hindu society, giving prominence to leaders from lower classes and working to open the Hindu priesthood to members of all castes. While caste continues to be a problem in certain segments of Hindu society, it is generally not because of these current Hindu social, religious and political movements, but because their reform efforts are resisted.

The Hindu Movement and Women's Rights

Generally, the right wing in the West is defined as opposed to women's rights. However, there are many

women's groups and active women leaders in the Hindu movement and in the Hindu religion. Being a woman is no bar for being a political or religious leader in India as it often is in the West. Hinduism has the worlds' largest and oldest tradition of the worship of the Divine as Mother, including as India itself. Great female Hindu gurus like Ammachi (Mata Amritanandamayi) travel and teach all over the world. The Hindu movement worships India on a spiritual level as a manifestation of the Divine Mother (Shakti).
Hindus were very protective of their women during the period foreign and kept them sequestered, which was often for their own safety. Unfortunately, this trend has continued among some Hindus in the modern world when it is no longer necessary. So while there is poor treatment of women in some parts of Hindu society, this has not been by modern Hindu teachers or movements that have tried to raise the status of women as Shakti.

The Hindu Bomb

Perhaps the main thing in recent years used to define Hindus in India as right-winged is India's testing of the nuclear bomb in 1998. Yet India's concern for its military welfare and need for a nuclear deterrent is certainly no more than what the democratic party in the United States has asked for. The Indian government

has at the same time argued for complete nuclear disarmament, which it would be happy to comply with. Note that the Dalai Lama supported India's nuclear testing. He can hardly regarded as a right-wing leader (except by the Chinese communists and their Indian counterparts).

The Indian Left: The Old Left

In India, the political terminology of right and left is defined by Marxists, who like to call anyone that opposes them right-wing or fascists, which they used to do even with socialists. In their view anything traditionally Hindu would have to be right-wing on principle, just as their views are always deemed progressive, even if supporting Stalinist tactics. This means that in India such subjects as Yoga, natural healing, vegetarianism and animal rights are all automatically right-wing because they are causes of the Hindu mind, with antecedents in ancient Indian culture. Great Hindu yogis and sages from Shankaracharya to Sri Aurobindo are classified by modern Marxists as right-wing, if not fascist[5].

[5] For example, in the United States where I live, I have supported ecology, animal rights and the cause of pluralism in religion, which the right wing here opposes. But in the Indian context I am labeled right wing or even fascist for raising the same issues.

However, the Indian left is mainly the Old Left, emphasizing a failed communist ideology and state economic planning such as dominated Eastern Europe in the decades following World War II and took it nowhere. It wreaked the same havoc with the economy and educational systems of India and kept the country backward. Indian communists are among the few in the world that still proudly honor Stalin and Mao (while warning of the danger of Hindu fundamentalism)! Communist ruled Bengal still teaches the glory of the Russian revolution for all humanity, though Russia gave up communism ten years ago! The Old Left was itself intolerant, oppressive and dictatorial, sponsoring state terrorism and genocide wherever it came to power. Indian leftists have never rejected these policies and look back with nostalgia on the Soviet Union!

Therefore, we must remember that the leftist criticism of Hinduism coming from the Indian left is that of the Old Left. This old left in India does not take up many of the causes of the new left like ecology or native rights. It even sides with the policies of the political right-wing in western cultures upholding the rights of missionaries to convert native peoples and continuing colonial accounts of Indic civilization.

The communist inspired left in India has tried to demonize the Hindu movement as a right-wing phenomenon in order to discredit its spiritual orientation. The aim of the Indian left is to keep the

Hindu movement isolated from any potential allies. After all, no one likes fascists, which is a good term of denigration that evokes negative emotions for both communists and capitalists.

Hinduism and the Left

The causes taken up by the Hindu movement are more at home in the New Left than in right wing parties of the West. Some of these resemble the concerns of the Green Party. The Hindu movement offers a long-standing tradition of environmental protection, economic simplicity, and protection of religious and cultural diversity. There is little in the so-called Hindu right that is shared by the religious or political right-wing in western countries, which reflect military, corporate and missionary concerns. The Hindu movement has much in common with the New Age movement in the West and its seeking of occult and spiritual knowledge, not with the right wing in the West, which rejects these things. Clearly, the western right would never embrace the Hindu movement as its ally. Right-winged labels have been cast on the Hindu movement in an uncritical way. Usually it has been little more than a casting of labels or stereotypes.
To counter this distortion, some Hindus are now arguing for a new 'Hindu Left' to better express the concerns of Hindu Dharma in modern terms. They

would see the New Left as more in harmony with Hindu concerns and a possible ally. Hindu thought has always been progressive and evolutionary, seeking to aid in the unfoldment of consciousness in humanity and not resting content with material or political gains as sufficient. Hindu Dharma should be reexamined by the New Left and the distortions of by the Old Left discarded. The New Left will find much in Hindu Dharma that is relevant to its concerns.

The Hindu movement can be a great ally to many social movements throughout the world. It has a base of nearly a billion people and the world's largest non-biblical religious tradition, with a long tradition of spiritual thought and practice. The Hindu movement can be an ally for any native causes, environmental concerns, women's spiritual issues and movements toward economic simplicity and global responsibility, to mention but a few.

Groups espousing such causes may have looked upon Hinduism as an enemy, being taken in by leftist propaganda. They must question these distortions of the Old Left. They should look to the Hindu view for insight, even if they may not agree with it on all points. They should not trust the anti-Hindu stereotypes of the Old Left, any more than they trust the views of the now defunct Soviet Union.

Towards a Non-Political Social Order

However, the entire right-left division reflects the conditions of western politics and is inaccurate in the Indian context. We must give up such concepts in examining Indic civilization, which in its core is spiritually based, not politically driven. It reflects older and deeper concerns that precede and transcend the West's outer vision. As long as we define ourselves through politics our social order will contain conflict and confusion. Democracy may be the more benign face of a political order, but it still hides the lack of any true spiritual order. We must employ the vision of dharma and subordinate politics to it, which should be a form of Karma Yoga.

The New Left also contains various distortions from a Hindu perspective. True liberalism requires a responsibility to the entire universe, not just an assertion of individual human rights, which can be to the detriment of larger social groups or to the natural environment. It looks to the spiritual human being, our immortal consciousness, and not to the bodily-based ego as the real human being. It helps preserve organic social orders and avoids interference with natural cultural development.

We cannot look to politics to change the world, but to spirituality to change politics. Hindus should not try to remake Hinduism according to current images of political correctness, but should connect the world to a

greater idea of humanity than political concerns. These follow the vision of the great yogis and sages who have stood outside of western political concerns and viewpoints.

What is said to be ‘politically correct’ is often ‘spiritually incorrect’. It consists of simplistic outer solutions that do not go to the root of the human problem, which is one of consciousness, not only social or material equality. We must look back to an organic and spiritual order to society that cannot be defined by either the left or the right of western politics, and which will hopefully set both aside. This is what Hindu Dharma can offer.

Part III

A New Model of Vedic Science

Part III.1

Vedic Knowledge and the Coming Planetary Age

The Vedas are the oldest literature of India, preserved by the people of the region for thousand of years to represent their unbroken culture. The Vedas have survived the vicissitudes of time better than any ancient literature in the world. They became honored throughout the entire subcontinent over two thousand years ago, where Vedic verses and mantras resound in homes and temples to the present day. They are not simply a relic of the past but have inspired modern teachers like Sri Aurobindo to a new vision of humanity and the future of the planet.

The Vedas reflect a continuity of teachings, a rishi vision and an emphasis on Dharma that has characterized the culture of India in its many forms. The traditional name of India, Bharat, derives from the name of a famous Vedic king and the Bharata dynasty kings were the dominant kings in the Rigveda itself.

The Vedas are usually looked upon as religious documents, but this can be misleading. The Vedas deal not only with ritual but also with mantra, Yoga and meditation or the deeper spiritual and mystical practices that transcend outer religious formalities. They extend to all domains of culture and knowledge,

with branches of the Vedas dealing with music, architecture, astronomy and medicine.
The term ‘Veda’ itself means knowledge, wisdom or vision, from the root ‘vid’ meaning to see or to know. This knowledge is defined twofold in the Upanishads as a higher, internal or Self-knowledge, through which immortality can be gained, and a lower or external knowledge, through which we can understand the external world. The lower knowledge includes what the modern world refers to as science and technology. This division is reflected in the Brahmanas as an adhyatmic or inner/spiritual knowledge and an adhibhutic or elemental/material knowledge.
The Vedas are not books of faith or revelations of prophets and do not rest upon a person, institution or belief. They teach a way of knowledge that is open, diverse and pluralistic. They realize that there is One great truth behind the universe, a universal being and consciousness, but that it can be approached from many different levels and angles. They honor the Divine Self as the supreme principle, not an external authority of person, book or institution.
Starting with the Rigveda, meditation is regarded as the way to true knowledge. The Rigveda recognizes a higher or meditative aspect of the mind, called ‘dhi’ (later referred to as ‘buddhi’) as our main faculty of true perception. From this same root ‘dhi’, the term ‘dhyana’ for meditation arises. Dhi is the higher and

interior portion of the mind (manas), which enables us to perceive the eternal truth. This cultivation of dhi or buddhi is the main characteristic of Yoga, Vedanta and Buddhism.
The Rigveda mentions other meditational powers as 'kratu' or right intention, 'daksha' or skill in action, 'medha' or higher perception, 'manisha' or intuition, and 'chetana' or consciousness. Its deities like Agni are not simply outer powers or nature forces but possessed of a wise consciousness (pracetas) or discriminating awareness (vicetas). The Vedas emphasize mantra or energized speech for developing the mind, particularly satya mantra or the Divine word of truth. They are aware of a cosmic order of Satyam Ritam Brihat, the Reality, Truth and Vastness, showing an intelligible universe that is benefic in nature and pervaded by consciousness.

The Vedic Yajna

The Vedas have a ritualistic basis as a means of harmonization with Dharma, not as an enforcement of dogma. Our life consists of what could call be called 'ritual offerings' of food, breath, thought, and consciousness. The universe is an interdependent organic field that has its own rhythm and harmony undergoing a constant dynamic interchange. Attuning our lives to the universal harmony, in which each being

is an offering to the whole and in which the entire universe is reflected in each being, is the Vedic ritual or Yajna. This Yajna occurs on many levels inwardly and outwardly. Outwardly, the Vedic rituals consist of various tangible offerings, like wood or ghee, to the sacred fire, to generate a positive energy for the world. Inwardly, Vedic rituals consists of offerings of breath, speech and mind to the Divine or our higher Self to raise us to a higher consciousness and ultimate realization of our true nature.

Vedic Deities

The Rigveda consists of a thousand mantric hymns of various rishis with the purpose of promoting the inner and outer Yajna, to harmonize humanity with the universal order of life and consciousness. In this process various deities are worshipped, of which three are most important.

First is Agni, the deity of the Earth, which relates to the sacred fire, and refers to the higher Self within our embodiment. Agni, which means ‘the inner guide (agra ni)’, is the Divine being immanent within us as our own individual soul or jiva. He is called Vaishvanara (the universal person), Jatavedas (the knower of all births) and Kumara (the Divine Child). Agni is the Divine force behind the material world, the spirit hidden in nature and in the body, that we must bring forth in order to

set our spiritual quest in motion. Just as fire can be brought forth from wood through friction, so this inner fire can come forth from the mind through meditative inquiry.

Second is Indra or Vayu, which relates to wind or spirit, the deity of the Atmosphere. Inwardly it refers to Prana, the cosmic energy or life-force that is the ruler (Indra) of the entire universe. Indra specifically is the perceiver, representing the lightning force of inner perception that opens up our higher consciousness. Indra relates to the transcendent aspect of the Self (Paramatman) and the cosmic lord (Ishvara). The union of Agni and Indra or fire and air is the union of the individual soul with the cosmic being.

Third is Surya or the Sun, the deity of Heaven, meaning not the outer luminary but the principle of light and consciousness, which is the knowledge aspect of our higher intelligence or dhi. Surya as wisdom complements the Indra principle as will power and also relates to Paramatman on a transcendent level and Ishvara or the cosmic lord on a manifest level. These two great deities of Indra and Surya are the basis for later Shiva and Vishnu, which like Indra and Surya, represent respectively Prana and the Sun. Agni, our inner flame, when enkindled, grows and becomes the Sun or the full light of truth and unity.

The goal of the Vedic Rishi is to become one with the deity as a part of the process of Self-realization. The

seer Vishvamitra proclaims, “I am Agni, from birth the knower of all beings” (Rig Veda III.26.7). Similarly, Vamadeva proclaims, “I was Manu and I became the Sun” (Rig Veda IV.26.1). The Vedic Rishi himself is Agni, the Divine Fire on Earth.

Such Vedic insights gave birth to the Upanishadic tradition and their more evident teachings about the Atman. However, this teaching is also found in the Rig Vedic mantras hidden in a veil of mantra and symbolism. The Vedas often state, “Paroksha priya hi deva, pratyaksha dvishah,” meaning “the Gods prefer what is secret and dislike the obvious.” Few scholars West or East have been able to penetrate this veil of secrecy to discover the spiritual core of the Vedic teaching.

Vedanta and the Vedas

According a number of teachers both Indian and western, Vedanta is the main teaching that derived from the Vedas and the Vedas in themselves are not important. They regard the Vedas as obscure ritualistic texts from which Vedanta gradually emerged as way of Self-knowledge. Yet Vedanta is not simply the end (anta) of the Vedas. More appropriately speaking, it is the essence (rasa) of the Vedas. The Vedas begin and end with Vedanta, which is the very theme, harmony or concurrence behind all Vedic texts. We cannot claim to

have the entire Vedantic tradition until we understand its Vedic foundation in the Rigveda itself.

Though all the specific terminology of Vedantic philosophy cannot be found in old texts like the Rigveda, a Vedantic meaning can be ascertained behind the Vedic mantras if one knows how to discern their essence[6]. Even the Vedic ritual is a means of connecting the individual to the universal, through the great elements of nature or the deities that govern the universe. The outer Vedic ritual is an inner Vedantic thought exercise, gradually equating the factors of world experience (the deities) with factors of internal experience (the mind, prana and senses. The outer Vedic ritual leads to an inner Vedic ritual of offering speech, prana and mind to the higher Self, which takes us to Vedanta. A right understanding of the Vedas, therefore, connects us with the Vedantic roots of humanity and helps us connect with the Self of all beings.

Vedanta and the Gods of the Vedas

The Vedas begin characteristically with a prayer to Agni or the sacred fire. This Agni is no ordinary fire but

[6] Note my book Wisdom of the Ancient Seers for such an explication of Rigveda mantras. Also note the works of Sri Aurobindo and Kapali Shastri in this regard.

represents the inner flame of awareness, the practice of mindfulness that is the very foundation of Vedanta. Agni is the light of reason that we must enkindle within ourselves in order the find truth. It is the hidden light of the Self, which gives life the individual soul and holds its aspiration to Divinity that follows our every birth into this mortal realm.

The most commonly lauded deity of the Vedas is Indra, who represents energy, vitality, and shakti, particularly the power to break through ignorance and reveal the light of truth. Indra represents the Divine will within us, the seeking of self-expression and self-realization that is the very motive power within all creatures and the evolutionary force of life itself. Vedanta is the unfoldment of the Indra energy seeking supremacy over the entire universe, as life's seeking of transcendence in Self-realization.

The Vedic Sun or Surya is the light of truth that illuminates reality. The Divine Self is the internal Sun that reveals all the functions of nature as well as all the faculties of the mind. Vedanta is about the rising of that Sun of truth and its ending of the dark night of Samsara, ignorance and rebirth. The Atman is the true light behind all.

Meditation takes us to Samadhi in which there is an experience of bliss. The Vedic God Soma represents the stream of spiritual delight from the inner perception of the unity of all. It is the understanding of the Self in all

beings and all beings in the Self that frees us from all sorrow. The flowing Soma that the Vedas seek is the flow of bliss from the Absolute (Sacchidananda) into the human mind. Vedanta culminates in that Somic bliss born of Self-realization.

Just as Vedanta is reflected in these four major Vedic deities, it is reflected in the minor deities as well. The deities of the earth sphere are forms of Agni as the flame of awareness hidden in the material world. Those of the atmospheric sphere are forms of Indra as the power of truth perception hidden in our pranic movements. Those of heaven are forms of Surya and Soma or Sun and Moon as the wisdom and bliss of spiritual experience. The Sun as the light of consciousness is the Supreme Deity of the Vedas, the One God of all the Gods, the One Self of all the souls. All Vedic deities reflect its powers and qualities on various levels or to different degrees.

Relevance of Vedic Knowledge Today

What is the current relevance of Vedic knowledge and of the existent Vedic texts that we have? The Vedas show us the existence of a spiritual humanity from which we have perhaps not so much evolved as fallen. Modern man looks upon progress through science and technology as the real measure of progress and enlightenment. Yet, if we look deeply, we see that

spiritual insight has not developed along with civilization and was actually higher in ancient times than today. The yogi in a cave is certainly at a higher level of consciousness than most scientists or technocrats today.

As a species, we have not just simply evolved out of a material basis in order to gain mastery of the external world. We have a deeper spiritual heritage, an ancestry of great rishis and yogis, that we must also recognize to truly find our place in the cosmic order. The Vedas pass on the legacy of this earlier spiritual humanity in the best preserved ancient texts that we have. But this emphasis on rishis, sages and seers as behind human culture can be found in all ancient civilizations whether those of China, India, Egypt, Babylonia, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe or the Americas.

In the last few centuries, our civilization has developed greatly in terms of science, technology and the commercial world. However, we have not had a corresponding spiritual unfoldment. In fact, during this period many of our greatest spiritual traditions have been, if not lost, at least diminished. The earth wisdom of native peoples of Asia, Africa and America has often perished along with their cultures, facing the onset of modern civilization. The yogic wisdom of India and Tibet has been marginalized by western political and religious influences. The Vedas, as the older tradition of India, contain both this earth wisdom, such as revealed

in the Bhumi Sukta of the Atharvaveda, and the great yogic tradition as well.

At the same time, we do see a renewed interest in the Indian spiritual tradition worldwide, with the growing popularity of Yoga, Vedanta and Buddhism, along with related artistic, medical and astrological teachings. These Indic traditions have become linked with other spiritual traditions of Asia, America, Africa and Europe, including those outside of the field of the present dominant religions of Christianity and Islam. We can find the essence of all these ancient and modern spiritual paths in the Vedas. Through the Vedas we can reclaim our spiritual heritage as a species and use that as a foundation on which to build a new age of consciousness, universality and global responsibility.

Part III.2

Consciousness and Mind in the Vedic Tradition

Brain, Mind and Consciousness

Three interrelated aspects of intelligence exist that we can examine as human beings. The first is the brain, the physical organ of intelligence subject to outer surgical and biochemical forms of examination. Such brain research has allowed scientists to map out the brain and its various functions with great precision and great curative or corrective powers for mental dysfunctions.

The second is the mind, the conditioned awareness that operates through the brain as its instrumentality. The mind is subtler than the brain and can access higher levels of awareness beyond the physical. Actually, we all primarily experience the mind, not the brain. We live in the realm of our senses with little feeling of our internal bodily organs. The mind has various functions like thought, emotion, ego, sensation and memory. It can not only reflect physical realities but can infer the laws behind physical appearances and speculate about what transcends physical reality.

The third factor of intelligence is consciousness or an unconditioned awareness beyond both body and mind. Yogis claim to experience this and most people can

sense or infer it through the mind as our inherent intuition of the eternal. Consciousness is usually defined as immortal and infinite, not limited to any organ or instrument, physical or subtle. It is a universal principle pervading the entire world of nature, not as simply expressed in embodied creatures.

I would also introduce a fourth factor, prana or the life-force, both as an individual and as a cosmic principle. If there is a universal consciousness there must also be a universal life-force for its manifestation. I have avoided using the term 'God' for consciousness as a universal principle because the term is often defined in terms of faith or emotion and is commonly confused with personal experience or historical revelation.

In addition, apart from pure consciousness can be inferred a 'cosmic intelligence' or cosmic mind as the ground of the laws of the universe, whereas consciousness itself transcends time and space. We could call consciousness and cosmic intelligence the 'immanent' and 'transcendent' aspects of consciousness, with the mind as the 'individualized' aspect of consciousness.

Modern science focuses on the brain and has tried, though unsuccessfully, to define the mind in terms of brain function, as if the mind did not exist before birth or persist after death, and its functions were identical with that of the brain. The mind, being the subtlest and most inward part of our embodied nature, is not easy

to examine on an outer level, any more than inner concerns like art, philosophy or religion can be reduced to a scientific formula or experiment.

The Vedic tradition defines the mind as having four functions as reason (buddhi), sensation-emotion (manas), ego (ahamkara), and memory-feeling (chitta), and as connected to prana, which in turn is connected to the physical body. These functions have been described in great detail in traditional texts and it is possible to see how they are functioning in each person.

Vedic science calls the mind the 'subtle body' (sukshma or linga sharira) and considers it capable of surviving death and reincarnating into a new body, along with a subliminal core of memories and tendencies (karmas and samskaras). These samskaras make up the karmic code of the individual, which is more important than the outer physical genetic code in determining individual behavior and destiny. Vedic practices, like Yoga and rituals, aim at changing this karmic code from something restrictive to something enlightening, and ultimately freeing us from it altogether so that we can reclaim our original nature as pure consciousness.

Vedic science regards the deepest core of the mind, what could be called the soul (jiva) as the entity that reincarnates as part of a higher evolution of consciousness. However, it holds that this jiva and the universal consciousness are not accessible to the

ordinary human mind but require rigorous spiritual and meditation practices (sadhana) that can take many years in order to really experience. Such sadhana requires purifying the mind and putting it in a silent, calm or one-pointed focus, which eventually allows it to perceive the underlying universal consciousness. For this purpose it requires an energization of prana to raise the mind to a higher level of functioning.

Questions

Relative to modern science this view raises some questions. A number of physicists have speculated about consciousness as the ground of all physical laws and as necessary to explain the workings of the universe, which depends upon and is altered by its observer. However, if a universal consciousness exists, there must be a universal life-force as well. This would mean that the mind, sense organs and sensory capacities are universal factors like light or sound and would, in various forms, be found in different creatures throughout the universe, as well as being generally available, like interstellar dust, in cosmic space. Similarly, there would be a cosmic intelligence as a ground of the laws of nature, as its causal principle. It would not be a question merely of consciousness and physical reality but of various intermediate principles between the two such as the tattvas of Vedic thought

(as in the Samkhya system of philosophy). Clearly there is much more in the universe that modern science is only suspecting but that Vedic science has long known and explored.

Relative to the relationship between the brain and the mind, there are distinctions between the impairment of the brain and the impairment of intelligence that we can easily observe. When a genius has a stroke, the brain is damaged but their intelligence is not always reduced, only the ability to communicate it. Similarly, there are people with well physically developed or large brains that are not particularly intelligent. When a great yogi meditates there would be changes in the brain chemistry that should be to some extent measurable, but his does not mean his experience is measured, any more than the movement of a man is understood by the movement of his shadow.

On a deeper level, the question arises whether the approach of modern science is appropriate to consciousness or whether an alternative approach is required, that of the inner science of Yoga. Science approaches the mind through measurement and technology, through extending the range of our sensory instruments. Yogic science regards this outer approach as inherently limited and ultimately illusory (Maya) because each system of measurement (Maya also means measurement) creates its own bias, measuring some aspects but not the whole, which in its totality

and essence must remain immeasurable. Yoga uses the methods of meditation to turn the mind itself into an instrument to perceive consciousness directly, which it holds can occur once the mind is detached from the field of the senses (nirvishaya manas). This inward turning of the mind is the essence of the yogic spiritual quest. It has its logic, rationality and experiments but in the mind itself, not externally.

Vedic Science Revalidated

In the Vedic view, we live in a conscious universe. Consciousness exists not only as an individual factor in living beings, but also as a cosmic factor in the forces and objects of nature, including the planets and stars. Through our individual consciousness we can access this universal consciousness and its wisdom, grace and power, just as a child can call on and gain the help of its parents. This understanding affords us an entirely different relationship with the universe, not as an external object but as part of oneself. Such a vision can totally transform our culture and our species and bring about a new interaction between our species and the greater world.

There is much ground for a new dialogue between Vedic (yogic) Science and modern science as between the inner and outer aspects of science. Vedic science holds that our intelligence (buddhi) can not only

discriminate the names, forms and numbers of external reality, but, turned within, can discriminate the eternal aspect of consciousness from these outer factors. This internal discrimination, viveka, is said to be the means of liberation and transcendence.

If this yogic approach is valid, then Vedic sciences including Vedanta (the way of Self-realization), Ayurveda (pranic or energetic medicine), Jyotish (Vedic astronomy and astrology) and Vastu (Vedic science of architecture and directional influences) can have a scientific basis through such factors as universal consciousness, cosmic intelligence and the universal life-force. The Vedas offer us a science and technology to access this universal consciousness and life-force, just as we can use electricity or solar power with the help of modern science. These are important concerns for determining the real meaning of our existence. We can no longer define life in terms of chemical forces alone. We must recognize subtler levels of reality than matter or energy up to pure consciousness itself.

Spiritual and Material Sciences

India has developed and preserved this science of consciousness since times immemorial as its great heritage, with living traditions and great modern teachers like Ramana Maharshi, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Though India has been slower than

the West to develop science and technology, this has been more a circumstance of political instability owing to foreign invasions, not any religious hostility to the open pursuit of knowledge which has always been honored in the country.

As India has probably more scientists than any other country in the world today, it has the best position among countries to integrate the spiritual and material sciences. This will probably be its most important contribution to humanity in the coming decades. To this end, its scientists need to be willing to engage in the disciplines of yogic science and the practice of meditation so that they can really contact the consciousness behind the universe. Similarly, its yogis need to reformulate their teachings in clear, modern and experimental terms so that the yogic way of knowledge can gain credibility as a scientific, not simply religious pursuit.

Humanity needs to develop its heritage both of spiritual and material sciences. The spiritual sciences provide the view of consciousness that enable us to use the material sciences—and the awesome forces they can release—in a truly humane and sensitive way for the entire world. We must once more recognize the consciousness at the ground of all being and all existence everywhere, in the animate and the inanimate. This is not a matter of more information, but

a different view of life in which we learn the art of looking within.

Part III.3

Vedanta, the Foundation of the Indic School of Thought

The most characteristic system of thought coming out of India has always been Vedanta, the philosophy of Self-realization rooted in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The Vedantic message of the unity of Atman and Brahman, the individual and the universal, is the prime message of all Indic thought. The great sages behind the modern Hindu renaissance and the independence of modern India since Vivekananda were all inspired primarily by Vedanta and looked back to Vedantic texts for their guidance. The prevalence of the Gita as one of humanity's greatest and most popular books is owing to its profound Vedantic message. India in its essence is the land of Vedanta, which is the land of the Atman, the Supreme Self, symbolized by its towering Himalayan peaks.

Why has Vedanta been so important and central to the Indic tradition? It is because Vedanta is the science of Self-realization, the way of Self-knowledge through which we can transcend the external world and realize the One Being-Consciousness-Bliss that is the foundation and goal of all life. Vedanta provides us with the wisdom and the skill to realize the absolute, in which we can go beyond all churches, governments and

social institutions. Because of this background Vedantic view of universality and transcendence no single organized religion or belief, even Buddhism, could come to dominate India and why spiritual experience was always placed above outer religious forms. Because of Vedanta living gurus were always made more important than old books or even than the sages of old.

Vedanta and Science

According to Vedanta, the real goal of science, which seeks to know reality, is knowledge of the Self. If we learn all about the outer world but fail to understand ourselves we will remain not only ignorant but also miserable. Unfortunately, modern science has not yet recognized the Self and so is still wandering in outer cosmic laws and forces that miss the real purpose of human life. Modern science is not yet enlightened or spiritually aware but is still groping in the dark night of matter.

For modern science to develop at a deeper level, it should learn to ask fundamental Vedantic questions. Such are "What is the one thing, knowing which everything can be known? By what can the knower be known? What is the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind? Or the great inquiry 'Who am I'" Such questions do not simply deal with learning about some external object or phenomenon in the universe,

but are about the very nature of knowledge and consciousness itself. We must question not only the external world but the very inner ground of our own consciousness.

Vedanta and Religion

In the Vedantic view, the true goal of religion, which seeks to establish our proper relationship with God, is knowledge of the Self. If we pray and do service and offer everything to God but fail to know ourselves, our God is just a mental illusion that obstructs any higher consciousness from developing within us.

In the Vedantic view, the Self is greater than God and dwarfs all religious institutions and teachings. To become truly spiritual we should seek to know ourselves, even if this requires setting formal religion aside.

In the Vedantic view, the goal of religion is to take us to the point that we seek Self-knowledge, that we begin the earnest quest for the true Self. At that point, we transcend all religious institutions, edicts and dogmas and can happily dispense with them as no longer necessary.

Unfortunately, the predominant western religions do not recognize any goal of Self- realization and have no real concept of the Atman. They have no organized teaching or sadhana in order to achieve it. For them,

the institution, church, bible, prophet or savior is final and sufficient. Salvation consists of going to some heavenly world after death, in which some bodily identity often physical persists. This is the most we can realize as a soul who ever remains a servant, if not a slave of God. The idea of becoming or transcending God is a heresy in such traditions.

In the Vedantic view the Self is greater than any church, scripture or savior, and in our true nature we need none of these. To make human beings slave to a religion is to deny their true Self and turn religion, which should be an aid in liberation, into one of the worst factors of bondage. We should use religion as a positive tool in whatever manner or form it truly helps us become wiser and more compassionate, but we should not let ourselves become reduced to it, or it is not a truly spiritual pursuit and cannot develop a higher consciousness within us.

Vedanta and Independence

In spite of, or perhaps because of, all our modern progress we still live in a world of servility and bondage. I am not speaking of political servility, such as not having the right to vote, or economic servility, not being able to feed oneself, though these problems still exist for many people. I am speaking of the servility of the mind and heart, the dependence upon an external

reality and an external sense of identity for our happiness in life.

America, in its own Declaration of Independence, recognizes life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as the God given rights of man. While life and liberty may be self-evident, the pursuit of happiness is not. The pursuit of happiness is the pursuit of desire and outer happiness, which is why America developed primarily as a commercial culture. The pursuit of happiness leads to bondage and servility to the outer things that promise happiness for us. Really, happiness like life and liberty should be given and need not be pursued.

The Vedantic declaration of independence is of being, consciousness, bliss and freedom absolute as our very nature, not a right given to us but as the very core of our being that we only need rediscover. This rests not an outer achievement and acquisition but an inner search with an empty mind and receptive heart. With a Vedantic view we can explore the entire universe in our own minds, connecting to the universal life-force as our unlimited source of energy. We don’t require technology and what we achieve will not be lost at death. Vedanta sets us free not from outer servitude but from all external limitations by connecting us to the infinite and the eternal.

False Compassion

Various religions teach that we are sinners and without the church we cannot be saved. Believing this dogma we become dependent on the church for its favors and rewards, including heaven itself. Our religious teachers tell us that we are weak and that we must be saved, or that if we are strong, we must devote ourselves to saving others. We set up charities to help the poor, teaching them the greatness of the savior as means of improving their lives not only religiously but economically.

We should note very clearly—the very thought of another as weak and needing to be saved is itself a sin against the Self, the Atman of that person. That thought renders the person weak and, if the person believes in it, we have only created a permanent ward of our charity. This may make us feel good, like the pleasure a mother has in feeding her children, but in this case the children cannot grow up. Their growth will remain stunted.

Even the need to enlighten others can be a form of false compassion. We look at others as ignorant, suffering sentient beings and think that without our help they are condemned to bad karma and futile rebirth for perpetuity. Instead of awakening them to their own strength, we make them dependent upon a teaching, guru, tradition or technique. The very thought

of others as ignorant is itself the mistake. Everyone is the Atman. We must awaken everyone to their true nature, which is free, full and unlimited, not in need of any comfort or security.

Similarly, modern socialism teaches us that we are weak, whether because we are minorities who are victims of past discrimination, or because of normal human problems of disability, disease or aging, and that we cannot survive without the favors of the state and its social welfare system. The same phenomenon occurs as in religion. The individual does become weak and obsequiously curries the favor of the state. The modern welfare state resembles a gigantic religious charity and takes over the lives of people. What is really aggrandized in most such charities is the church or the state, while the people remain trapped in bondage, living on the meager handouts of institutions, which drain public resources.

Multinational corporations, though they are earning high profits and taking money away from the undeveloped world, also like to portray themselves as global charities concerned about the welfare of the people and countries that they are really exploiting. They create schools, hospitals or insurance programs for the benefit of those working under them. Once in harness by the corporation ones entire life can go to them and, as a reward, the corporation might help us in old age.

Today's humanity, from different angles, has succeeded in creating religious, economic and political servility for the glorification of churches, states and multinational corporations. The Vedantic way is quite different. It is to give real spiritual and psychological power back to the individual. You are not a sinner. You don't need anyone to take care of you. You are not weak. You don't even need the world to be happy. In your true Self you are above material needs, beyond physical desires, not even in need of any entertainment.

Don't throw yourself away on any belief, institution as greater than yourself. No one can save you and you cannot save another. There is no one who is weak. Do not grovel but assert your higher Self. If you really want to help others, first given them back themselves. Help them to help themselves. If you look upon others as dependent upon you for their well-being, you are just glorifying your own ego as the provider. You are not doing anyone a real favor.

Vedanta may be criticized for lack of compassion because it does not emphasis that we are poor, sinners or ignorant. It does not say that we need to be saved, put on welfare or enlightened by another. But what Vedanta teaches is true compassion and true self-determination. It gives us back our own Self and our own ability to create our own destiny and transcend the entire universe of matter and mind.

For India to rise up it must reclaim this Vedantic lion-hearted spirit and throw off the darkness of servility, not only in social and political behavior but also in spiritual practices. Vedanta should become the national ethos. India is not a poor and undeveloped nation needing to be saved and uplifted from the outside. It is the land of Vedanta, the realm of the Atman, that once more needs to assert its spiritual glory for the entire world. Such a Vedantic land will be the true teacher of the world and all material problems will be easily mastered from the Self-mastery that unlocks all powers. This is the real path to progress in India, not groveling after foreign favors or resting in the shadow of alien creeds.

Part III.4

Vedic Yoga, the Oldest Form of Yoga

Yoga in various forms is popular throughout the world today. However, few Yoga teachers, much less Yoga students, understand the Vedic roots of Yoga. They are rarely aware of Yoga's integral relationship with Hindu culture, which it pervades on all levels including music, dance, medicine, astrology and spirituality. Yoga is the inner technology that goes along with Vedic wisdom, which is the inner knowledge that enables us to understand the conscious universe and utilize its forces for ultimate well-being and liberation.

Yoga is a comprehensive set of spiritual practices designed to enable us to realize the greater universe of consciousness that is our true nature. The term Yoga means to unite, coordinate, harmonize, work, or transform. It refers to the linking all aspects of our being, from the physical body to our highest intelligence, with the true or universal Self. This process occurs in different forms and stages relative to the condition of the individual and variations of time, place and culture. Vedic knowledge is that knowledge of the Divine or higher Self that the practice of Yoga is seeking to realize. Veda is spiritual wisdom and Yoga is its application. Yoga has developed over many thousands of years and evolved into many branches and types,

making it easy to lose sight of its origins. Today Yoga has been reduced, particularly in the West, to its physical or asana side, and little of the greater Yoga tradition is seriously studied. Even in India the Vedic basis of the tradition is seldom given proper attention.

Yet as we move into a new planetary age, the older spiritual traditions are beginning to resurface in the collective mind. As we move forward we must comprehend our origins and reclaim our ancient spiritual heritage. The Vedas contain the keys to the perennial wisdom of humanity. The Vedas proclaim that we are all children of light, the progeny of the great seers (Maharshis), who have wandered far. In order for us to evolve in consciousness we must revitalize the seeds of higher evolution that the ancient sages planted within us millennia ago. The revival of the Vedas is crucial to the emergence of a new spiritual global culture.

Various scholars and yogis have aimed at researching and rediscovering the original Vedic Yoga. Ganapati Muni, the chief disciple of the great South Indian sage Ramana Maharshi, did notable work in this respect. So did Ganapati's disciple, Daivarata Vaishvamitra, whom Maharishi Mahesh Yogi once brought to the West and called a great modern Rishi. The Vedic Yoga was central to the work of the great modern seer-poet Sri Aurobindo, who based his integral Yoga on a Vedic model, and Kapali Shastri, an important disciple not

only of Aurobindo but also of Ganapati Muni. Several other modern Vedic teachers have contributed to the revival of Vedic knowledge including Swami Dayananda Sarasvati of the Arya Samaj, Swami Gangeshwarananda and Pandit Satvalekar. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has been its most notable popularizer in recent years, promoting the idea of Vedic science, including Ayurveda and Jyotish worldwide.

Vedic Yoga

Vedic Yoga is the oldest form of Yoga dating back to the Rigveda, which is perhaps the oldest book in the world and the legacy of the ancient Sarasvati civilization of India. The original Vedic Yoga was envisioned by numerous Vedic seers of the Angirasa and Bhrigu families, of which the most important are the seven great seers Vasishta, Vamadeva, Bharadvaja, Gritsamada, Vishvamitra, Kanwa and Atri, the main seers of the Rig Vedic hymns. Through the vision of the Rishis, the Vedas set forth the main possible spiritual paths for humanity. The Vedas contain a comprehensive key to cosmic evolution as well as to human spiritual unfoldment, unlocking all the laws of the universe.

Vedic language employs powerful mantras to set forth this teaching with several levels of meaning and application. In this regard, the Vedic language has a

depth and dimension that modern languages, products of the outer mind and ego, cannot approach. Vedic mantras reflect the blueprint of cosmic intelligence through which all that exists can be comprehended in pure consciousness. Vedic mantras contain the prototypes of all knowledge and the keys to all powers of creation. Yet to understand and use them correctly requires a special insight. Vedic mantras cannot be grasped by the ordinary intellect, which is why academic renderings of the Vedas are almost useless and breed many distortions.

Three Types of Vedic Yoga

The basic Vedic Yoga is threefold, reflecting the tripartite universe, and has several important correspondences:

Yoga	Faculty	Veda	Loka	Deity	State
Mantra Yoga	Speech Vak	Rigveda Mantra	Earth Prithivi	Agni/ Brahma	Waking State
Prana Yoga	Prana Energy	Yajurveda Ritual	Atmosphere, the Waters	Indra/Shiva Transformer	Deep Sleep
Dhyana Yoga	Mind Manas	Sama Ecstasy	Heaven Dyaus	Sun Preserver	Dream

Mantra Yoga involves developing Mantra Shakti, the power of mantra, through which the mantra becomes alive as a tool of transformation in the mind. From this arises Mantra Sphota, mantric insight, through which the inner meaning of the mantra can be grasped, linking us up with Divine laws. This allows us to understand all forms in the universe as manifestations of the Divine Word, the creative vibration OM. This mantric force sets in motion all other inner energies, not only on an inner level but can also provide mastery over all the forces of nature.

Prana Yoga involves developing Prana or Vidyut Shakti (lightning or electrical force), and Pranic insight (lightning perception). This allows us to work with our vital energy as a manifestation of the energy of consciousness. Mantra becomes Prana, as Prana (breath) itself is unmanifest sound. This Prana provides the impetus and vitality for inner transformations.

Dhyana Yoga, or the Yoga of meditation, involves developing Buddhi or awakened intelligence, called Dhi in the Vedas, and its power of truth perception. It allows us to understand the universe and the human being as unfoldments of Cosmic Intelligence. This higher intelligence arises through the energization of speech and Prana and brings an extraordinary transformative power into the deepest level of the mind. In Dhyana Yoga the light of truth floods the mind and we come to know the unitary nature of all reality.

The Three Vedas correspond to these three Yogas. The Rigveda, the Veda of mantra, sets forth the basic mantras or seeds of cosmic knowledge on all levels. The Yajur Veda, the Veda of sacrifice, shows their application through ritual, which is both external and internal (yogic), individual and cosmic. The main internal ritual is Pranayama. The Sama Veda, the Veda of unification, shows the realization of the mantras through ecstasy and insight. These three forces operate in our three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, and can transform them into states of Divine waking or perception, Divine dream or creation, and Divine rest or peace. These are the three worlds of Earth, Atmosphere and Heaven, not as external but as internal realities, through which we can grasp all the worlds as formations of our own mind.

Indra and Surya, Shiva and Vishnu

The three main Vedic Deities or Devatas correspond to the three types of light. Agni is fire, which is heat or thermogenic light that burns up all negativity and reformulates our nature on a higher level. It also represents the Atmic light that is hidden in darkness, the Self as the witness of all the movements of the mind. Indra is lightning, which is light energy or electrical force through which we can ascend and move on a higher level of being. It represents the Atmic light

of perception that destroys the illusions (Maya) and limitations of ignorance symbolized by Vritra, the serpent or dragon that is Indra's enemy. Surya is the Sun, which is pure light or magnetic force that draws us into the omnipresent infinite. It is the Atmic light of truth that illuminates Brahman or the supreme reality in the entire universe.

These three Vedic deities are the basis of the three main deities of later Hinduism. Vedic Indra is the prototype of Shiva, who like Indra is a deity of Prana (the life-force), Shakti (power) and transcendence. Vedic Surya becomes Vishnu, who is also a Sun God or form of Surya in the Rigveda. Vedic Agni becomes the basis of Hindu Skanda, born of Agni, the Divine Child[7]. The two dominant deity orders of Hinduism—the Shaiva and Vaishnava—reflect the Aindra (Indra) and Saura (Surya) lines of the Rigveda, which makes the supreme deity alternatively that of Heaven (Vishnu or Surya) or the Atmosphere (Indra or Shiva).

The Vedic atmosphere sometimes becomes the realm of the Waters that transcend Heaven and Earth, not merely the intermediate world placed between Heaven and Earth[8]. The second world becomes linked to the

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[7] Aspects of Vedic Agni also appear as Hindu Ganesha (Agni as the priest worshipped first) and Brahma, the Creator who works through the Vedas and the Vedic fire.

[8] When Vishnu or Surya is the supreme deity, then heaven is the highest world, and the atmosphere is only the intermediate world.

fourth or the realm beyond manifestation. The Atmosphere becomes the all world or the Cosmic Ocean, the ocean of the heart, which spreads Heaven and Earth apart, bringing the infinite into realization. Its deity, Indra or Shiva, as the Supreme will and power becomes the highest deity. This ocean is space and its waves are the worlds. In the space within the heart is contained all the universe and the Supreme Self beyond manifestation. Other times, Heaven or the realm of light is the supreme world and the Atmosphere is below, with Surya or Vishnu, the Sun God as Supreme[9].

These two deities also reflect the order of the elements. Shiva or Indra is Vayu or wind, which is the elements of air and ether. These are the two formless elements that transcend the formed elements of earth, water and fire that dominate on Earth and in the manifest world. Air and ether represent the Spirit that transcends the material forms of earth, water and fire. Surya or Vishnu is light that takes the forms of all the elements and is not simply limited to the element of

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When Shiva or Indra is the supreme deity, then the atmosphere gets connected to the formless realm of air and space beyond heaven and earth (fire and earth).

[9] When Vishnu or Surya is the supreme deity, then heaven is the highest world, and the atmosphere is only the intermediate world. When Shiva or Indra is the supreme deity, then the atmosphere gets connected to the formless realm of air and space beyond heaven and earth (fire and earth).

fire. Ultimately, light and energy or Sun and Wind are the same. That is why in the Rigveda the term Atman is applied either to the Sun, Surya, or to the Wind, Vayu[10].

The Shaivite and Vaishnava lines, therefore, reflect the atmospheric and heavenly orders and their deities of Wind/lightning and Sun. Such a twofold division of supreme deities was common throughout the ancient world from India to America, where either the Atmospheric God of lightning and wind is supreme (which includes the Jewish Jehovah) or the Heavenly Sun God. The two are ultimately identified as the One Deity, the Supreme Self as either light or energy, consciousness or Prana.

The integral Vedic Yoga combines these three Yogas. It has its special form, which is meditation on the heart, tracing the origins of speech, prana and mind back to the Self in the heart. This is the practice of Self-inquiry. It is not done simply by repeating 'Who am I?' but requires a mantric and meditational control of speech, Prana and mind. It examines all the movements of speech, prana and mind in all states of consciousness as powers of the Atman. It is particularly connected to

[10] The connection of Shiva/Indra and Prana, with Vishnu/Surya as the Sun explains why Shiva is the predominant deity of Ayurveda that is connected to the life-force, while Vishnu dominates Jyotisha or astrology, connected to the Sun. 4 Prana, similarly, can be identified with either Vayu or Surya.

Agni Vaishvanara, the fire as the universal person, who is also called Kumar, the child, and Guha, the secret space within the heart. This form of Agni, as Ganapati Muni notes, represents the liberated soul (mukta purusha). However, the Vedic Yoga is vast and many sided. We have only outlined a few of its characteristic features here, like trying to reduce the Puranic Hindu pantheon to a few key ideas or formulations.

Part III.5

Ayurveda, the World's Medicine for the Next Millennium

Ayurveda Today

In 1989 I attended a conference on medical applications of Yoga in Mumbai. There were a number of Indian medical doctors on the panel but, strangely as a westerner, I was the only Ayurvedic speaker. After my talk promoting Ayurveda, someone in the audience remarked, "We in India believe in something only once it has been reimported." While most Indian medical minds are busy pursuing modern medicine, Americans are increasingly looking into alternative medicine including Ayurveda, and see India as the homeland of Ayurveda and yogic spirituality.

India's cultural medical genius has recently gone into modern medicine. Families traditionally devoted to Ayurveda have switched over to modern medicine and forgotten their roots. Indian allopathic doctors are often opposed to Ayurveda which, with their western education, they consider to be primitive. I have found doctors in America to be more interested in Ayurveda than doctors in India who have a naïve faith in modern medicine such as was typical during the fifties and sixties in the West.

Unfortunately, Ayurveda is not adequately funded in India today, receiving only a small percentage of the

medical budget. This amount is only enough to pay a low wage for Ayurvedic teachers. While the government funds allopathic treatment, people generally have to pay out of their own pockets for Ayurveda. This poor funding of Ayurveda is responsible for the backward state that occurs for Ayurvedic schools and hospitals, not anything necessarily inferior about the medicine itself.

Today there are several hundred Ayurvedic schools in India and thousands of practitioners. Ayurveda remains popular in the villages and has its place in urban life as well. Ayurvedic herb stores can be found in most communities, offering a wide variety of health care products from soaps to special formulas for boosting the immune system or improving memory and concentration. Modern Ayurvedic schools teach Ayurveda along with allopathy and the average Ayurvedic doctor knows a lot about modern medicine, including many of its diagnostic methods. Ayurveda is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and is the subject of much modern medical research. Therefore, in spite of poor funding, Ayurveda is still flourishing and spreading anew.

A new modern Ayurveda is starting in India and in the West with Ayurvedic health spas that can be quite upscale in terms of facilities and treatment. This is not confined to the TM (Transcendental Meditation) movement, which first emphasized it, but includes

hotels in South India and other Ayurvedic centers throughout the world sponsored by various groups and organizations. There is nothing necessarily archaic or poverty-based about Ayurveda. The new Ayurveda, like Yoga, is attended by those in pursuit of the spiritual life and many affluent people from the West. The western interest in Ayurveda is helping to revive Ayurveda in India and makes it more respectable, showing it as an important medical system in its own right, not just a poor alternative for those who do not have access to modern medicine.

History of Ayurveda

Ayurveda has a long and glorious history in India, going back to Vedic or Indus-Sarasvati times over five thousand years ago. The Vedas mention the healing, rejuvenative and consciousness-boosting power of special plant preparations called Somas that were made from a variety of mountain plants prepared in ghee, milk, yogurt and other natural substances. Classical Ayurveda includes the three great classics of Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya. No other culture in the world, not Europe or China has preserved such extensive medical texts of great antiquity that are still used today. They cover all aspects of health and life-style including foods, herbs, mantra, massage, meditation, daily and seasonal health

regimens and clinical methods like Pancha Karma and surgery.

Ayurveda is mentioned in the Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Puranas, Tantras and Yoga Shastras, sometimes in great detail as the complementary medical system to Hindu culture and yogic spirituality. It was used by the Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs as well as Hindus, and forms the basis of Tibetan medicine. For example, the great Buddhist teacher Nagarjuna, to whom was attributed the Shunyavada or Voidness school of Buddhist philosophy, was also a great Ayurvedic teacher. Many great modern Yogis like Sri Aurobindo, Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh and Paramahansa Yogananda spoke highly of Ayurveda and used it with their students. Most Yoga centers in India and the West now offer Ayurvedic classes or treatments.

Ayurveda and Modern Medicine

Modern medicine is recognizing that we must consider the nature of the individual in health and disease. It is not enough to give the same treatment to everyone suffering from the same disease. Their individual makeup should be considered because it causes the symptoms and development of the disease to vary considerably.

Ayurveda contains perhaps the world's best system of constitutional types that helps us treat each individual appropriately. It classifies people according to the three doshas or biological humors of Vata, Pitta and Kapha, (which correspond roughly to the air, fire and water elements energized by the life-force). From these three main types derive many subtypes and conditions, resulting in a unique analysis of each individual's specific health condition. This typology is not the product of any single factor like the current popular blood types in naturopathic medicine, but reflects the whole range of biological manifestations including body frame and weight, facial features, digestive tendencies, disease tendencies and psychological indications of emotional temperament and mental acuity. Ayurvedic books contain such typology tests and Ayurvedic doctors spend much time determining the individual nature and needs of each patient based upon these considerations.

Ayurveda treats the individual more so than the disease, which it sees as a by product of imbalances within the person. It makes the individual important and strengthening his or her vitality the goal, regarding the disease manifestation as secondary and derivative. It says that the same individual will be prone to various diseases that reflect their individual make-up and energies. Therefore, Ayurveda can provide treatment that covers not only a specific illness but all the

potential diseases that the individual is likely to fall prey to over time.

Modern medicine is realizing the importance of disease prevention. It is not enough to treat diseases after they arise. This is like trying to put out a fire after it has already started and done some damage. Real treatment consists of preventing the disease from arising in the first place. And many diseases that are difficult to treat once they are fully developed can be prevented, if caught early enough.

Ayurveda is based upon a firm foundation of disease prevention, which is not simply a matter of regular medical check-ups but requires a healthy lifestyle in harmony with one's own individual constitution and unique life-circumstances. Disease arises mainly from a breakdown of the balance of internal energies in a person, not merely from external pathogens, however powerful these may be. Ayurveda's main method of long term treatment is to strengthen our internal energy (ojas). This is similar to modern medicine's effort to strengthen the immune system, which is the energy of our body to defend itself from outside attacks. But Ayurveda has a better understanding of this internal energy and its connections with mind and consciousness. It views our vital energy not merely as a biochemical phenomenon but as a product of the mind and prana and includes how we think, breathe and use our senses in its methods of healing.

Ayurveda and Consciousness

In the modern world we are gradually discovering the importance of the mind and emotions in the disease process. Ayurveda is inherently a mind-body medicine. Its doshas or biological humors are not simply physical pathogens, elemental imbalances or dietary indiscretions but include the effects of impressions, emotions and thoughts. The doshas reflect the consequences of emotional toxins like anxiety, anger and attachment on our physiology.

What junk food does to the body, junk impressions, such as our mental diet of violent movies, does to the mind, rendering it dull and heavy. Negative emotions impact our health by adversely disturbing our internal organs, weakening the liver and heart which carry emotions. Disturbed thoughts impact our health through unbalancing the flow of energy through the nervous system. Disease always has a psychological component, and psychological disorders impact our vitality in a negative way.

Ayurveda emphasizes the role of consciousness in health and disease. It understands the workings of the mind on an organic and energetic basis just as it does the workings of the body, so that we can provide proper nutrition and exercise for the mind as well. It teaches us to be conscious how we live, what we eat, how we move and how we think so that we can bring

the healing power and insight of consciousness into our existence. Whatever we give consciousness to, we help improve, just as exposure to sunlight helps plants grow. This spiritual side of Ayurveda is not a matter of religious dogma, occult hocus pocus or New Age fantasy but part of the sophisticated spiritual sciences of Yoga and Vedanta, with which Ayurveda is intimately connected.

Ayurvedic Treatment Methods

Ayurveda prescribes individual life-style health regimens designed with regard to age, sex, climate, vocation and other factors. We cannot expect to be healthy if we don't have a good diet, if we lack proper exercise or if we are filling our minds with disturbing influences. We create our own health or disease by our daily actions. So too, without changing these habitual activities, we cannot improve our health in a lasting manner.

Ayurveda shows the health benefits of the Indian style of cooking, like how the right spices can help us digest food. It teaches us the dynamic effects of each food article for health and disease. While modern medicine is only now beginning to accept the role of food and disease through an examination of phytochemicals, Ayurveda has long regarded diet as the basis of health. We are not only what we eat but also how we eat and

with whom we eat. Food preparation is as important as food types.

Food is the first form of God, the Anna Brahma of the Upanishads. Without honoring this form of divinity, the other forms may not be able to manifest in our lives. In this regard Ayurveda recommends vegetarian foods to promote higher (sattvic) qualities of compassion and understanding, under the idea that food not only nourishes the body but also the mind and emotions.

Ayurveda contains many important herb and mineral preparations that reflect the botanical wealth of the Indian subcontinent and thousands of years of experience with plants. It has what is perhaps the most complex and intricate herbal pharmaceutical industry in the world with pills, powders, resins, extracts, confections, and oils not to mention Ayurvedic cosmetics, toothpastes and soaps. Such Ayurvedic products can improve our lives in many ways.

Ayurveda works along with Yoga to prescribe helpful asana, pranayama, mantra and meditation methods for optimal health and spiritual development. The asanas that are good for one person or good for one season, just like the food articles, may not be good for another. Pranayama has its energetic effects. By strengthening Prana or the life-force we can improve perception and circulation and add more energy to counter all diseases. Indeed Prana is the second form of God, the Prana Brahma of the Upanishads.

Mantra and meditation practices have their energetics that should be adjusted according to individual needs and capacities. Mantra helps us energize the mind and clear the subconscious. Meditation helps us open our higher awareness potentials so that we can deal with our lives with more insight and detachment.

Ayurveda has an extensive system of detoxification called Pancha Karma. Pancha Karma includes a system of oil massage, sweating therapy, and various internal cleansing processes to remove the doshas from the tissues, which can effectively eliminate disease-causing toxins from the body so that they can no longer promote the disease process. A number of Pancha Karma centers are now functioning in the West and most Ayurvedic clinics in India offer this service.

Ayurveda has a special science of rejuvenation or rasayana. It recognizes that the body contains a secret potential to renew itself in old age, just it does daily in the state of deep sleep. Ayurveda contains specific exercise, diet, and meditation regimens to facilitate the rejuvenation of body and mind. As the baby boomer generation gets older, which has been very active physically and has pioneered the new interest in alternative medicine, this rejuvenation approach is bound to become much more sought after.

Perhaps most importantly, with its broad basis, Ayurveda provides a good model for integrating all the worlds different medical systems in a harmonious

manner. It recognizes the importance of surgery, particularly for larger tumors, but also its limitations, its weakening of our internal energy. It recognizes the importance of drugs, particularly for acute pain relief, but also their limitations, their tendency to dull the mind and depress our energy. It accepts the healing power of food, herbs, massage and other natural healing methods and shows their applicability and long term healing power.

Yet while respecting all healing modalities Ayurveda also shows us how we can heal ourselves. What we do for ourselves on a regular basis, through the food, thoughts and lifestyle we choose creates who we are and shapes where we are going in life. To think that an outside force, person or treatment can suddenly heal what has taken perhaps years to create, is a delusion. It is an abdication of responsibility for our choices moment by moment. In Ayurveda, the practitioner can make recommendations, but it is up to the client to implement them on a regular basis.

The Future of Ayurveda

Ayurveda is one of the main world systems of natural healing and mind-body medicine, with a popularity spreading to America, Europe and East Asia, a trend that has been steadily developing over the last fifteen years. However, in America Ayurveda is mainly being

taken up by the general population. Few Indians, particularly the many medical doctors, are supporting it or even adequately informed about it.

The current Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has mentioned the importance of Ayurveda for proper medical care in India, particularly for disease prevention. The same comments extend to the West where acute disease is no longer the main issue but rather how to improve our vitality and awareness for more creative and fulfilling lives.

As we move into a new millennium and a global age, Vedic knowledge of all types, with its universal vision, is becoming increasingly important. This includes Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic Astrology, Vedanta and Sanskrit. But as we are first of all physical creatures and as our health needs are radically changing in the computer world, Ayurveda may be the main vehicle through which Vedic knowledge expands again today. Through the Vedic approaches of Ayurveda, Yoga and Jyotish (Vedic Astrology) we have an elaborate system for self-healing, self-understanding, and self-realization. This marvelous heritage should not be forgotten, particularly in India.

Part III.6

Vedic Astrology: Space Age Science or Outdated Superstition

The government of India recently (2001) decided to reintroduce the subject of Vedic astrology into the schools and to teach it at a university level in non-Sanskrit courses. Naturally, this movement has met with tremendous opposition by a number of so-called modern or secular thinkers. They see the introduction of astrology as returning India to the dark ages and the harbinger of creating a Hindu religious state in the country. They would equate astrology with all the social evils and superstitions that the West associates with India.

However, astrology remains popular worldwide and is not limited to religiously conservative people (most orthodox Christians and Muslims have always been against it). In the West, it is common among the New Age and futuristic groups, though most scientists are opposed to it. In England, however, there is also a move to teach astrology in the schools and do scientific research on it.

The question arises: What is Vedic astrology and how important is it to understand India and its venerable traditions? The answer is simple: Vedic astrology is an integral part of Indian culture, as commonly used today

as thousand years ago in the country. In fact, the computer revolution has made Vedic astrology, which requires detailed calculations, more accessible. Schools of Vedic astrology can be found in the major cities of India, offering in depth two year courses on the subject. Regular new books on Vedic astrology are coming out every year through the main publishing houses in the country and these continue to sell well. There is no region of India where astrology in one form or another is not popular or not part of older traditions.

Astrology is an integral part of the Hindu tradition, which most Hindus still use on a regular basis. Buddhists and Jains also have their traditions of Vedic astrology, which is the basis of Tibetan astrology and the Tibetan calendar. A number of scientists in India follow Vedic astrology and find it to be scientific. This includes physicists, medical doctors and engineers, several of whom are well known writers and teachers of Vedic astrology. Of course, all Indian politicians use Vedic astrology, so deep seated is its usage, even the ones that publicly deny it, including Pandit Nehru.

We should note that traditional Vedic astrology includes astronomy (its mathematical side), meteorology, and astrology per se (its predictive and interpretative side). It reflects a yogic or integrative approach to the universe that studies how the individual and the cosmos are related, and how biological forces and celestial phenomena mirror each

other. It fits in well with the other yogic sciences and spiritual pursuits that have long characterized Indic civilization.

Great yogis and sages of India up to modern times have followed Vedic astrology or written about it. These include Sri Aurobindo, Paramahansa Yogananda and his guru Sri Yukteswar (who was an astrologer), and Ganapati Muni (chief disciple of Ramana Maharshi). Astrological works have been ascribed to great Hindu sages like Vasishta, Parashara, Bhishma, Kalidasa and Madhvacharaya. Great astrological thinkers like Varaha Mihira have been placed among the great sages and poets of India. Indian philosophy, literature and religion commonly use astrology and refer to it.

The Value of Vedic Astrology

What is the value of Vedic astrology that has kept it alive for so many centuries? First of all, Vedic astrology is the basis of the Hindu calendar that is still followed throughout the country and used for determining national holidays like Ram Navami, Krishna Janmashtami, Shivarati, Navaratri and Diwali. From it arises the designation of the Hindu months as Chaitra, Vaishakha and so on. To understand this calendar requires a knowledge of Vedic astrology. Such dates are not arbitrary but reflect the celestial influences in operation on them.

Second, Vedic astrology is a limb or branch of the Vedas, a Vedanga. It is said to represent the eye of the Veda. After all, everything in life depends upon timing. In the Vedic view, timing is not simply a matter of keeping in harmony with business and political trends but requires attunement to the celestial influences that create time and dispense the forces of karma. Vedic astrology is used for determining the right timing of Vedic rituals and for the right timing of all events, spiritual and mundane, including Vedic sacraments and Yoga practices. It is also used for naming of children in India, using sounds that reflect the moon's constellation at the time of birth.

Third and most importantly, the Vedic astrological birth chart is a crucial document for understanding our karma. It is like a road map for our entire nature and life experience. Interpreted properly it provides keys to our unfoldment on all levels from physical and mental health, to education, career, relationship, family and the spiritual path. In this regard the Vedic astrologer is like a scientist or a doctor, uncovering the deep currents of our destiny.

In such interpretative usages, we must note that Vedic astrology is not a kind of fatalism. Vedic science is first of all the science of karma, which means action. It teaches us that we create our own destiny in life by the nature of our actions. But there are two qualifiers with this process. First, our action occurs over time. This

means that who we are today is a result of what we did yesterday, including our actions in previous lives. In order to change what we are now takes time. Previous wrong actions can still affect us today, though we can alter our future. Second, our action occurs in the field of cosmic law, which is connected to cosmic forces of time through the stars and planets. We must consider the forces of the world and the laws of nature in which we act, whether those of health and disease or ignorance and enlightenment. We can't change our destiny in such a way that requires altering the laws of the universe or the functioning of the cosmic mind!

Vedic astrology shows us the basic karmic pattern that we have to work with in life. But it also shows us how to modify and optimize our karma both for the present and for the future. Towards this end it uses various remedial measures like gemstones, mantras and yajnas (rituals). These help us draw in the benefic energies of the cosmos and ward off those that are destructive. A good understanding of ones birthchart and how to rectify the planetary influences within it is a great aid to help us get a handle on our karma in life. This means that Vedic astrology has a practical relevance for improving our lives. It helps us optimize our life-potential, not reduce it to some preconceived pattern.

Vedic Astrology and Science

Vedic astrology is a system of great complexity and intricacy that few that criticize astrology are aware of. A

well-trained Vedic astrologer must examine the planets, signs, houses and nakshatras (constellations), along with their permutations and combinations (aspects and yogas), as well as means of various means of determining their strengths and weakness (shadbala). A Vedic astrologer takes into account sixteen divisional (amsha) charts, ashtakavarga (benefic planetary points), several dasha (planetary period) systems, the annual chart or solar return (varshaphal) and transits, if not additional factors. The Vedic chart requires a very multilayered and comprehensive approach that necessitates deep thinking and patient analysis. When examining group or national events, rather than just individual charts, the considerations must be yet more detailed, plotting national currents and sub-currents.

Just as a scientist must conduct many experiments before coming to a conclusion about the laws of nature, or as a medical doctor must do special testing before confirming a diagnosis, the Vedic astrologer must examine a good deal of information in the birth chart, subcharts and current planetary influences before arriving at a solid determination of what is likely to transpire. This type of astrological research, like that of science, takes time and is not a simple matter of quick predictions.

Such a vast system of astrological examination is very different than the common stereotype of astrology as reflecting twelve sun signs (which Vedic astrology does

not follow at all). Reducing astrology to it would be like reducing science to what is taught in a child's first grade class. Vedic astrology also remains based on the fixed stars unlike western astrology that follows the equinoxes, and so the charge of no longer accurately mirroring stellar positions, which scientists raise against western astrology, cannot be lodged against the Vedic system. Unfortunately, most people condemning Vedic astrology have never really studied the system and are unaware of its complexity (seldom have they read even one serious book on the subject!). They judge it by stereotypes or by its popular appearances, reducing astrology to what is found in the newspapers. We must look beyond popular distortions in the field of astrology, just as in other fields.

Of course, bad astrologers are partly responsible for the disrepute that astrology is often held in worldwide. Astrology, particularly when not honored as a science or philosophy, can easily get confused with crude fortune-telling. Yet just as traditional medicine is being vindicated today, so too traditional astronomy (which includes astrology) may regain its place in the world mind. In fact, traditional medicine and astrology always went together, not only in India but also in Europe. Both were linked to spirituality and mysticism and gained the attention of great minds.

The Universe in Science and in Vedic Astrology

In the Vedic view the universe is the very breath or prana of the Absolute (Brahman). The breath of God creates the force of time on a cosmic level, just as our inhalations and exhalation create the experience of time on an individual level. Time, therefore, is not a mere material force but is a manifestation of Divine will and energy.

The universe of Vedic astrology and that of modern science are no longer far apart and are getting closer every day. Both have a vision of a vast universe of space and time that is part of a greater infinite and eternal reality. Both recognize the existence of many universes and many cycles of creation. Both recognize subtle forces connecting all objects in the universe in various energy fields. Both regard each atom in its movement as affecting the entire universe. Both are trying to unlock the consciousness that such a magical universe must depend upon for its mind-baffling workings.

Vedic astrology teaches that we live in a conscious universe interconnected by mind, life and energy on gross and subtle, inner and outer, individual and cosmic levels. The individual human being or Purusha has his counterpart in the universal being or Purusha, of which the outer world is his body. This universal Purusha is time (Kala Purusha) which works through the Sun and the stars. The basis of astrological thinking consists of drawing connections or inferences (bandhus) between

the individual (adhyatmic) and the cosmic (adhidaivic). In this regard, astrology is part of the science of Yoga. It reflects the same understanding of the unity of the individual and the cosmos.

We should note that teaching Vedic astrology in schools in India is not like the insistence of Christian fundamentalist groups in America that evolution be banned and the Biblical account of creation taught instead. Teaching Vedic astrology does not require that modern science is not taught, nor does it necessarily go against the findings of modern science. It adds an Indic perspective to science. It also opens the door for greater scientific study to validate this ancient wisdom. There was a time when Yoga was dismissed as superstition just as astrology is today. Some medical doctors are taking up natural forms of healing that the previous generation of doctors dismissed and backward or superstitious. Clearly, astrology is not far behind in this new adaptation of ancient wisdom.

Astrology and Civilization

One can understand a civilization by the form of astrology it employs, which reflects its cosmology and its understanding of time and eternity. In the modern world, our time is told by clocks and our calendars have no spiritual meaning. They are just a convenient system of enumeration that has no real connection to the living

universe. Nor surprisingly, our time has little meaning for us, unless we are sick or dying. We usually count our time in dollars and are otherwise bored if we are not either making or spending money. Our lives are not connected to the greater universe or even the local field of nature. We are not part of the rhythm of the cosmos or connected to great cosmic cycles. We have often lost track even of the seasons, the phases of the moon or the rhythm of the day.

Astrology teaches us that time is part of the sacred movement of the cosmos, linked with eternity, and reflects a cosmic intelligence present in the stars. The movement of time is a progressive manifestation of the Divine, an evolution of consciousness on both individual and world levels. Our current civilization has banished the sacred from time and has no sense of the eternal. Even western religions are mainly historically based, not extratemporarily aware, which is why they have largely remained extroverted and aggressive, rather than introverted and meditative like their eastern counterparts. They too have had little place for astrology, which in the West has been mainly a legacy of classical Greek and pagan culture.

Clearly, modern civilization can be enriched by ancient spiritual sciences, just as these spiritual and occult disciplines can be made more dynamic through a modern and global application and proved with scientific research. During this age when we are looking

to travel to the stars, we should not forget that the stars, like the entire universe, dwell within us. The universe is not apart from us or alien to us but is fundamentally part of our own nature.

Part III.7

Solar Power and the Gayatri Mantra

Solar Energy Within and Without

The Vedas worship the Sun, Surya, as the source of light for the entire world. But for the Vedic people, light is not a material force but a power of life, love and intelligence. Nor is the Sun a distant entity unrelated to us. It has a presence on Earth through the power of its rays, which not only pervade our environment but also touch our very hearts. By the Sun the Vedas don't simply refer to the outer luminary, the central star of our solar system. They mean the principle of light and consciousness on a universal level, of which the Sun is our local representative.

One of the main problems in the world today is the energy crisis, which is endangering the very roots of life on the planet. Where can we get the power to run all our new technology, industry, transportation and media? Our energy needs are increasing daily with the growth in population and the increasing affluence of the third world that is now demanding the same conveniences that the western world has enjoyed for decades. Where do we get this additional energy? And how can we create it without destroying the planet by pollution that is the by product of most of our energy

sources? Solar power is the ultimate answer for the energy crisis because it is a clean source of energy that is unlimited, though the technology for it may take a few decades more to develop fully. We must make solar power the priority in energy research. We must return to the Sun to save the Earth.

The Vedas are said to reside in the rays of the Sun, which hold the Vedic mantras. The Vedas are the manifestation of solar intelligence, the light of consciousness on Earth. The sacred syllable OM itself is the sound of the Sun and the essence of the Vedas. The Vedic mantras carry light and power both for the body and the mind. India, therefore, should be at the forefront of solar research in order to keep up with its ancient Vedic heritage.

Our society is also complaining about low energy on a personal level. Particularly, in the developed world low energy diseases like chronic fatigue, depression and weak immune conditions are almost epidemic. Many people find that they lack the vitality to do what they want to do. Even if we try to meditate in order to contact a higher power, we often end up falling to sleep in the process and get nowhere owing to a lack of mental energy.

According to the Vedas, the inner Sun is Prana or vital energy, which manifests through the breath. To increase our personal energy, both for physical health and for mental acuity, the best practice is Pranayama or

breath control. Breath carries the subtle essence of speech, which is mantra. The inbreath carries the sound 'so' and the outbreath carries the sound 'ha'. The natural mantra "So'ham" in Sanskrit means, "He am I," referring to the Purusha or consciousness in the Sun, as the Isha Upanishad (v. 6) so eloquently proclaims. Our very breath is based upon unity with the solar creator and source of life and can be used to connect with its power.

We all want to increase our intelligence, concentration, memory and capacity for information. This is the key to strength and success in the information age. The best way to do this is to harness the power of the inner Sun, which is to connect with cosmic intelligence through mantra and meditation. Each one of us possesses a portion of the light of consciousness, a ray of the solar creator that endows us with understanding. This faculty is called 'dhi' in Vedic thought refers to the meditative aspect of the mind (dhyana manas) and 'buddhi' in later Indian thought, referring to awakened intelligence.

The best mantra for awakening the higher mind is the Gayatri mantra, which is a mantra to the solar light of consciousness to awaken our meditative mind (dhi). It brings us the Divine solar power of consciousness, love and prana—the supreme light of truth.

Vishvamitra and the Gayatri Mantra

The Gayatri mantra was the gift to the world of the great Rishi Vishvamitra, seer of the third book of the Rigveda. Vishvamitra was one of the greatest Vedic Rishis but also the most controversial. He began as a great king and warrior who wanted to add spiritual power to his worldly conquests. This brought him in contact and in conflict with Vasishtha, the greatest and purest of the Rishis. Vishvamitra persisted through all difficulties, including those created by his own ambition, until after a long period of struggle through his will power and tapas he ultimately achieved Self-realization. Vishvamitra's path, therefore, was more of human effort than Divine grace. His was the path of the warrior, of discipline and struggle, defeat and victory. He shows the development of an indomitable will that can overcome all obstacles and even challenge the Gods.

Vishvamitra by his tapas eventually created such an internal fire that it began to threaten the Gods in heaven by its heat. For this the Gods sent the celestial nymph (apsara) Menaka to seduce him and take him off his path. The strategy succeeded, but not for long, and to fulfill another purpose that perhaps the Gods had not planned. From his union with Menaka, Vishvamitra begat a daughter, Shakuntala, who eventually became the wife of King Dushyanta. From the union of Dushyanta and Shakuntala was born King Bharata, from whom the name of India as Bharat arose. The whole

country of India, through its determinative dynasty carries the blood and spirit of Vishvamitra, which is closely connected to that of the warrior Goddess Durga. Vishvamitra's Gayatri mantra is the most important mantra of the Hindus, probably still recited by half the people in India today. It is the most sacred Vedic mantra, reciting at sunrise, noon and sunset. We can literally translate it as:

We meditate upon the supreme effulgence of the Divine Solar Creator that he may inspire our intelligence!

The Gayatri mantra encourages creative thinking, not as mere human invention but as our portion of cosmic intelligence. It exhorts us to attune ourselves to the cosmic mind and its laws of dharma. This chant is as valuable and appropriate in the modern world as it was in ancient times. We can use it whenever we wish to gain new insight and inspiration or to increase memory and concentration, even for mundane tasks.
Vishvamitra in the Rigveda states that his prayer or Brahma protects the Bharata people: (visvamitrasya raksati brahmedam bharatam janam, Rig Veda III.53.12). His prayer of course is the Gayatri mantra. As long as that mantra is recited in India, its ancient spiritual heritage will be preserved. India should not forget the Gayatri mantra, Vishvamitra or its

connection to the Sun. That is the key to its destiny as a nation. Humanity also must remember the Divine Self in the Sun, the Prana that is the universal energy, and our role in the cosmos to bring the Divine light of knowledge into the darkness of physical matter. This is not an issue of mere science and technology. It requires an inner science of Yoga and the enlightenment of the mind.

Part III.8

Outline of a New Vedic School

The outlines of a new Vedic school are not hard to determine because the older Vedic school simply needs to be redesigned in a modern context. Naturally, each of these subjects is a field in itself. Here I will only aim at showing the basic structure. It includes the main topics covered in the Six Vedangas, Four Upavedas and the Six systems of Vedic philosophy and their offshoots
Vedic Philosophy

Shad Darshanas (Six Schools of Vedic Philosophy) and Modern Applications

1. 1. 1. Nyaya – logic
2. 2. 2. Vaisheshika – categorization
3. 3. 3. Samkhya – cosmic principles
4. 4. 4. Yoga – methods of reintegration
5. 5. 5. Mimamsa – ritual
6. 6. 6. Vedanta – theology and ontology

Modern Vedanta

1. 1. 1. Neo-Advaita Vedanta
2. 2. 2. Neo-Yoga Vedanta
3. 3. 3. Neo-Bhakti Vedanta

Vedic Spiritual Practices (Yoga):
Yoga, traditional and modern

1. 1. 1. Jnana Yoga – Yoga of Knowledge
2. 2. 2. Bhakti Yoga – Yoga of Devotion
3. 3. 3. Karma Yoga – Yoga of Service
4. 4. 4. Raja Yoga – The eightfold Yoga of Patanjali
5. 5. 5. Hatha Yoga – Yoga of the Physical Body
6. 6. 6. Tantric Yoga – Sciences of Mantra, Yantra and Tantra

Vedic Science of Ritual:
Yajna
Daily, Monthly, Seasonal and Yearly Rituals and their effect on the
individual, society and nature

Puja
Devata Puja and its usages for Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha

Samskaras
The usage of sacraments on personal and collective levels

Vedic Medicine, Ayurveda:
Ayurvedic Life-Style Recommendations
Clinical Ayurveda
Ayurvedic Psychology

Vedic Physics (Jyotish – Adhidaiva Vidya):
Vedic Cosmology, the fourteen worlds (Loka Vidya)
Astronomy (physical influences)
Astrology (spiritual influences), Karma Vidya and Kala Vidya
Natal Chart
Mundane Astrology
Muhurta

Meteorology

Vedic Earth Sciences (Adhibhuta Vidya):
Hindu Ecology
Vedic Geology
Vedic Botany
Vastu (Sthapatya Veda)

Vedic Social Science (Varnashrama Dharma):
Social Stratification: Vedic view of family, tribe and community (Varna, Jati,
Samaj)
Stages of Life (Ashrama)
Vedic Women's Studies, the Goddess and the Role of Shakti

Vedic History:
Itihasa-Purana – Traditional Accounts of History Modern Vedic School of History History of India, History of Native Cultures, World History
History of Science from Vedic perspective

Vedic Arts:
Representational Art and Iconography (Murti Vidya)
Music and Dance (Gandharva Veda)
Poetry, Literature and Drama

Vedic Language Science:
Linguistic Theory
Sanskrit
Mantra

Towards a Greater Indic or Bharatiya School

An Indic (Bharatiya) School of Thought would predominantly follow a Vedic model but also have a place for non-Vedic Schools. It would include the five non-Vedic philosophies (four classical Buddhist school and Jainism), Buddhist and Jain Yoga schools, and Buddhist and Jain accounts of history (Jatakas). It would include the non-Vedic applications of Vedic sciences like the traditional Buddhist and Jain applications of Ayurvedic medicine and Vedic astrology as well as Buddhist and Jain forms of art and temple construction. Buddhist and Jain Sanskrit works and literature would be afforded a great importance.

Broader dharmic approaches to society, ecology and science should also be developed, using Indic systems in harmony with other spiritual, scientific and naturalistic approaches from throughout the world. Clearly, much work is to be done but there is an excellent structure from the past to build upon—a magnificent temple whose interior is in tact though whose outer walls need strengthening.

May such new Vedic and Dharmic schools arise all over the world!